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ABSTRACT

This sampler discusses California's English-language arts assessment program and presents examples of high school reading assessments, writing assessments, and writing prompts. The first section of the sampler takes an integrated look at the California's new English-language arts assessment. The second section presents the scoring guide for reading, three student responses to a sample high school reading prompt, and commentary on each student response using the criteria in the scoring guide. The third section of the sampler offers scoring guides and sample student papers for the four types of writing assessed in the spring 1993 assessment: autobiographical incident; interpretation; reflective essay; and speculation about causes and effects. The fourth section presents a writing prompt: a short story with directions for students to write about their reading; guidelines for students on working in small groups to discuss the story; and two writing assignments based on the short story. (RS)

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A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessment

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High School

Preliminary Edition

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SACRAMENTO, 1992

A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessment

High School

Preliminary Edition

A Sampler of English–Language Arts Assessment – High School was developed by the California Assessment Program's English-Language Arts Development Team (see the acknowledgments for the membership of the team and others who made significant contributions to the document).

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Acknowledgments

This document was developed by the California Assessment English-Language Arts Development Team.

CAP English-Language Arts Development Team

Joanne Arellanes, Cambridge Heights Elementary School, San Juan Unified School District
Bill Americh, Lompoc Senior High School, Lompoc Unified School District
Joan Brown, Alameda High School, Alameda City Unified School District
Lynda Chittenden, Park Elementary School, Mill Valley Elementary School District
Lois Clark, Mission Middle School, Jurupa Unified School District
Yvonne Divans-Hutchinson, Markham Intermediate School, Los Angeles Unified School District
Martha Dudley, Roosevelt Junior High School, Selma Unified School District
Johnetta Fleming, Franklin Middle School, Long Beach Unified School District
Rowena Hacker, Trabuco Hills High School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District
DeWitt Johnson, Ygnacio Valley High School, Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Kimi Kinoshita, Shasta Meadows Elementary School, Enterprise Elementary School District
Mercedes McMurray, Seaside Elementary School, Torrance Unified School District
Becky Orona, Washington Elementary School, Montebello Unified School District
Teresa Pitta, John Muir Elementary School, Merced City Elementary School District
Nancy Preston, Casimir Middle School, Torrance Unified School District
Sandy Rogers, Long Beach Unified School District
Kelly Smith, Salinas High School, Salinas Union High School District
Edie Sonnenburg, Buena Vista High School, Corona-Norco Unified District
Phyllis Turner, James Monroe Elementary School, Santa Rosa Elementary School District
Terry Underwood, Rutter Middle School, Elk Grove Unified School District
Peggy Watterson, Emerson Junior High School, Davis Joint Unified School District
Marilyn Whirry, Mira Costa High School, South Bay Union High School District
Linda Wiezorek, Los Berros Elementary School, Lompoc Unified School District
Darby Williams, James McKee Elementary School, Elk Grove Unified School District

Consultants/Advisors

Sheridan Blau, California Writing Project, University of California, Santa Barbara
Fran Claggett, Forestville
Mel Grubb, California Literature Project, Los Angeles County Office of Education

Sacramento County Office of Education

Sherry Arnold, Senior Staff Analyst
Linda Murai, Program Manager, Prevention and Student Services Center
Julia Stanfill, Stanfill Associates

Department of Education Staff

Juanita Jorgenson, Analyst
Barbara Weiss, Consultant
Jill Wilson, Consultant

CAP English–Language Arts Reserve Team

Karen Barr, Alpine Union School District
Diane Berger, California State University, Dominguez Hills
Jan Brink, Northern Humboldt Union High School District
Carol Brown, Norwalk-LaMirada Unified School District
Sherryl Broyles, Los Angeles Unified School District
Mary Carden, Santa Ana Unified School District
Loyal Carlon, San Diego City Unified School District
Mildred Cunningham, Los Angeles Unified School District
Juanita Darsa, Inglewood Unified School District
Kent Gill, Camp Sherman, Oregon
Gilbert Gonzales, San Diego City Unified School District
Stephanie Graham, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Sam Hatch, Lodi Unified School District
Jack Hobbs, Ventura Unified School District
Alice Kawazoe, Oakland Unified School District
June Kizu, Los Angeles Unified School District
Joe Lawrence, San Juan Unified School District
Patsy Lockhart, New Haven Unified School District
Helen Lodge, California State University, Northridge (Retired)
Judith Machado, Tulare Unified School District (Deceased)
Luis Martinez, Montebello Unified School District
Don Mayfield, San Diego County Office of Education
Joan McCarten, San Jose Unified School District
Barbara McCullough, Sylvan Union Elementary School District
Barbara Miller-Souviney, Cajon Valley Union Elementary School District
Marie Neer, Modoc Unified School District
Katherine Paull, Los Angeles Unified School District
Claire Pelton, San Jose Unified School District
Carol Penara, Richmond Unified School District
Mary Anna Rae, Torrance Unified School District
Marilyn Renger, Ventura Unified School District
Bill Saunders, University of California at Los Angeles
Gail Siegel, Ross Elementary School District
Julie Simpson, Fullerton Union High School District
Tei Ann Sugahara, Chualar Union Elementary School District
Carol Tateishi, Bay Area Writing Project
Sue Thomas, Elk Grove Unified School District
Bob Thornburg, Bishop Union Elementary School District
Carol Toomer, Hueneme Elementary School District
Fred Vogt, Kern High School District
George Wallach, Fremont Unified School District
Don Windsor, Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District
Josephine Zarro, Los Angeles Unified School District

Consultants/Advisors

Mary Barr, Special Initiatives, Subject Matter Projects, University of California, San Diego
Charles Cooper, California Writing Project, University of California, San Diego
Mary Ann Smith, California Writing Project, University of California, Berkeley

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I. California's New English–Language Arts Assessment: An Integrated Look

> Effective English-language arts programs include a wide range of assessment techniques to evaluate students' growth in understanding challenging literature, confronting important social issues and values in literature and their own lives, writing clear and lively prose, speaking thoughtfully and effectively, and listening critically, all of which enable students to participate fully in society.
>
> – *English Language Arts Framework*

English-language arts teachers at all grade levels have long recognized that students use language actively, interactively, strategically, and fluently as they construct and communicate meaning. Students can grow in their ability to use language as they explore the universe of discourse through their reading, writing, and thinking. Authors of *California's English-Language Arts Framework* envisioned a literature-based English-language arts program that actively engaged students in reading, writing, and reflecting on a wide range of significant literary works and human experiences. At the heart of the framework is a paradigm shift in which "constructing meaning" replaced "gaining knowledge" as the primary goal.

The shifting focus of English-language arts curricula statewide called for changes in instructional strategies. The *English-Language Arts Framework*, along with the state model curriculum standards and guides, repeatedly describe English-language arts programs that "encourage students to read widely and in depth, write often in many formats, study important writings from many disciplines, and relate these studies to their own lives in meaningful ways." In English-language arts classes, students are expected to be active participants in their learning.

Where once a single correct answer to a generic question was thought to be sufficient in determining comprehension, today such a measure is considered too constricting, not very informative, and an insufficient indication of the student's construction of meaning. The *Framework* speaks specifically to the need for assessment to mirror accurately the integrated parts of the language arts that contribute to the wholeness of understanding. "With the revised curriculum in place, assessment of its effectiveness must depend on tests that reflect the purposes of the curriculum. Teachers and others responsible for assessment will create tests based on significant works whose meanings have import for all students; tests will integrate all of the language arts by including significant reading and writing and reflecting the student's oral skills as well; and tests will focus on students' meaning, not on formalistic features such as plot and character." Since the construction of meaning is the essence of both reading and writing, the new assessment allows students to shape the outcome rather than to identify correct meanings that test-makers have posited.

The new English-language arts assessment has three major purposes:

1. To establish standards for evaluating students' performance when they read diverse kinds of materials for different purposes and when they write essays that reflect a variety of writing types
2. To measure how well students are able to construct meaning
3. To improve the instructional program by providing an assessment that reflects the *Framework* and incorporates the expertise of some of California's best teachers

The Development of the Assessment

The English Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee—a California Department of Education committee representing the whole spectrum of educators—working with internationally recognized leaders in the field, developed the guidelines for a new English-language arts assessment that would reflect alignment with the *Framework*, mirror exemplary English-language arts programs, and build on CAP's writing assessment. Such an assessment would:

- Assess reading in a way that allows students to construct their own meanings, by integrating new understandings with the unique knowledge and experience each brings to a task.
- Incorporate collaborative group work, which encourages students to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening in ways that reflect good instruction.
- Complement and strengthen the existing California writing assessment.

To carry out this vision, the Department of Education in 1989 expanded the team of classroom teachers that had been developing the CAP writing assessment to include English-language arts teachers from grades one through twelve as well as teachers of science, history, and mathematics. These development team teachers have been responsible for shaping the test format, developing prompts for the assessment, and constructing scoring rubrics.

Definition of Reading and the Reading Assessment

Reading, as defined for the purposes of California's English-language arts assessment, is the process of constructing meaning through transactions with the text. In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes the responsibility for interpreting the text, guided not only by the language of the text but also by the personal experiences, cultural experiences, and prior knowledge that the reader brings to the task. Rather than believing that the meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and the distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

As teachers we expect students to be actively engaged in making sense of important values, concepts, issues, and attitudes related to a text. We want students to think critically as they explore interests, clarify values, solve problems, resolve conflicts, generate new ideas, synthesize/apply learnings, set goals, and make decisions in response to the literature they read. We want to see what students can do with the information they acquire as a result of their meaning-making processes and also their attempts to discover new understandings.

In our rapidly changing world, students need to understand that there are many purposes for reading and to demonstrate the ability to read for different purposes. Some students may be able to read elaborate directions for playing a video game but be unable to make any sense of a chapter in their history book. They may be able to read the lyrics of a song but be unable to read a poem that has no accompanying sound. They may be able to read a novel but not a voter information booklet. Like the writing assessment in the middle grades and high school that measures how students write for different purposes, the new reading assessment includes a range of reading purposes students will encounter throughout their lives. Although we cannot assess reading in the abstract any more than we can assess thinking, we can assess the quality of reading by looking at written and graphic evidence of how the student interacts with a text.

Texts selected for the assessment are stories, articles, and poems appropriate for each grade level tested. Texts may, on occasion, be an excerpt of a long piece; they will always, however, be complete in themselves. Occasionally two related texts—a story and poem or an article and story—are paired. While it is not possible to match specific texts to individual pupils, the assessment does draw upon a diverse range of materials deemed suitable for English-language arts classes. Since students will construct meanings for a text based on transactions among text, context, and experience, selections for the assessment center around concepts familiar to students. In all cases, teachers on the development team evaluate the appropriateness of subject matter and complexity of text for each tested grade level.

Collaborative Group Work

Teachers on the development team wanted to assure that this assessment was sensitive to both instructional strategies used in the best classrooms in California and those recommended in *Framework*. The activities included in this section of the assessment serve two purposes. First, they allow students to extend their understanding of the reading passage by sharing the ideas they feel are important or exploring a particular aspect of the piece in depth with others. Second, they engage the students in activities that prepare them for the writing assessment.

The Writing Assessment

Criteria for selecting the types of writing to be assessed at elementary, middle, and high school levels include:

- Emphasis on what California's best school writing programs would use
- Relationship to students' reading experiences
- Consistency with students' cognitive development
- Appropriate curriculum sequencing
- Appropriateness for assessment purposes

The types of writing identified for the elementary writing assessment are more broadly-based categories developmentally appropriate for nine-year olds, while the middle and high school categories reflect the finer distinctions of writing types appropriate for their age groups. The eight types of writing used in the CAP writing assessments since 1987 for the middle school and those developed for the high school have been maintained in the new assessment. The chart on the next page shows the types of writing selected for each level of the assessment.

In the spring 1993 administration, two types of writing will be assessed at grade four: Expressive and Persuasive. At grade ten, four types of writing will be included: Autobiographical Incident, Interpretation, Reflective Essay, and Speculation about Causes or Effects. However, at grade eight, eight types of writing will be assessed.

Types of Writing	Elementary	Middle Grades	High School
Expressive	X		
Autobiographical Incident		X	X
Firsthand Biography		X	
Reflective Essay			X
Persuasive	X		
Problem Solution		X	
Evaluation		X	X
Speculation about Causes or Effects		X	X
Interpretation			X
Controversial Issues			X
Informative	X		
Report of Information		X	X
Observational Writing		X	X
Narrative	X		
Story		X	

The Design of the Assessment

The design of the new English-language arts assessment calls for students to read and respond independently to a text, to work in small collaborative groups, and to respond individually to a writing prompt. Each section is intended to take one class period (approximately one hour). A description of the three sections of the assessment format follows.

Section I: Reading

The reading section includes one or two texts and includes preliminary comments to prepare students for the reading activities. For example, if the task involves two or more passages, students are told that they will read a specific number of passages; if the passage is an excerpt from a longer work, a brief introduction to the excerpt is given. A statement then directs students to read the text and invites them to mark the text in any way that helps them to better understand what they are reading. ("You may mark the text in any way that helps you to better understand what you are reading.") They may annotate, ask questions, draw or write responses in a wide right-hand margin. The reading text fills the left-hand side of the page with the remaining space available for any notes or annotations that the student wishes to write or draw while reading.

After the text, each prompt has an initial response question or graphic activity. This question is designed to elicit students' immediate responses—feelings, questions, opinions, memories, ideas. Four to seven additional questions or activities help students move beyond their initial response to a deeper exploration of meaning. They allow students to demonstrate or extend their understanding of a literary text by connecting with, challenging, and reflecting on the text. Some of the strategies used in the prompts include double-entry journals , listing, clustering, drawing, completing charts or diagrams such as the "open mind" or Venn diagram. Students are invited to bring their own experiences into their transactions with the text in many ways. Each prompt presents a final opportunity ("This is your chance to tell anything else about this story, poem, etc.") that allows students to express any other insights, issues, or concerns not elicited by previous activities. Students may, through their writing or drawing on this page, come to closure and/or discover new insights emerging from the text and/or from their reading experience.

Written and graphic responses to texts offer powerful insights into student thinking and provide significant evidence of a student's reading performance. The scoring guide for reading identifies the quality of reading a student demonstrates as he or she engages in the process of reading. Though a student does respond in writing in this section, the quality of the writing is not evaluated. A reading score will be determined from the evidence of each student's performance on the reading section.

Section II: Group Work

Students who have read the same text selection(s) form small groups of five or less. Activities for this section serve two purposes: to extend students' reading of the text and to initiate prewriting activities that they will use in Section III, the writing assessment. Guidelines contain specific directions for collaborative activities such as sharing individual experiences with the text, exploring the text further, making group graphics, role playing, writing informally, sharing their drafts, and responding to each other's ideas for writing. This section is not being scored.

Section III: Writing

The writing assessment section is linked to the reading assessment in one of two ways. Some writing prompts link directly to the reading section by asking students to move beyond their initial interactions with the text to write a longer, more fully developed essay expressing their understanding of the text or evaluating the selection or a character in the text. Other writing prompts are more loosely tied to the reading, using the topic or theme of the reading selection as a springboard to an essay based on personal experience and knowledge. Each prompt has the following two parts and is designed to elicit one of the distinctive types of writing tested at a grade level:

> *Writing Situation/Getting Ready to Write.* This section of the prompt establishes a framework for the writing prompt and provides students with a context for their writing. It orients students to a type of writing and provides specific background about the topic. The occasion for writing is specified in this section, preparing students to be thinking about their intended audience.
>
> *Directions for Writing/Time to Write.* The second section gives students the directions regarding the assignment's topic, intent, potential audience, and any other information students need in order to respond to the prompt.

The essay written in response to the writing prompt receives two scores, one for rhetorical effectiveness and one for conventions.

Meeting the Needs of a Diverse Population

One of the greatest concerns the advisory committee and the development team members have grappled with as they have developed the new assessment for reading and writing is the effect it will have on California's diverse student population. Teachers want the assessment to have a positive impact on the curriculum, and with the future reporting of individual test scores, teachers want the new assessment to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their best reading and writing abilities, and not be a minimum competency test.

Some Californians have expressed the opinion that performance assessment may be unfair to certain populations of students and that multiple choice tests rely less on a student's proficiency in English and are thereby fairer to these students. The intent of California's new performance assessment is to expand the potential for student response and to allow all students to demonstrate their abilities to construct meaning through a variety of activities that include graphics, writing logs, and other strategies. Emerging readers often develop their writing skills by first expressing their ideas graphically, while experienced readers may come to new understandings in this way. This assessment gives opportunities for both graphic and written expressions of meaning. Teachers on the development team are very aware of the necessity of designing an assessment program that meets multi-cultural needs. They have worked in concert with ideas formulated in the California *English-Language Arts Framework,* and have employed every available means to insure that the assessment content—texts for reading, activities for group work, and topics for writing—reflect California's diverse population.

Reflections and Next Steps

California's writing assessment has been recognized nationally as the first large-scale performance assessment to be successfully implemented in K-12 public schools. A key to the program's success has been its close relationship to state frameworks and model curriculum guides for English-language arts, the leadership role of teachers in the test development and scoring processes, the availability of instructional materials and other assistance materials, and multiple opportunities for staff development.

Many of the components that received positive recognition in the writing assessment have been incorporated in the new integrated assessment. Special features of the English-language arts assessment include:

- Continued emphasis on maintaining a strong alignment between state curriculum frameworks and assessment
- A full range of carefully defined reading purposes and writing types
- The focus on reading and writing assessments as dynamic activities that involve the construction of meaning
- Group activities calling for students to interact with texts and with other students and providing opportunities for prewriting
- The formation of teams of teachers to design tasks, scoring guides, and support materials
- A commitment to staff development and scoring supported by regional consortia, the California Literature Project and the California Writing Project

The new English-language arts assessment will provide evidence of how students perform when actively engaged in real reading and writing tasks. Teachers on the development team, along with consultants and Department of Education staff, will continue to refine procedures as they analyze student papers, evaluate teacher responses, and inform their work with classroom experience. The far-reaching goals for assessment are made possible through the dedicated efforts of many outstanding educators who continue to see the teaching of tomorrow's leaders as an admirable and valued profession.

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II. High School Reading Assessment

The materials contained in this section include the scoring guide for reading and three student responses to a sample high school reading prompt that is based on an excerpt from Kate Chopin's *Story of an Hour*. The commentary that follows each paper evaluates the student response using the criteria contained in the scoring guide and explains why the paper reflects a high-, medium-, or low-range performance.

Scoring Guide
for
The California Reading Assessment

Reading, as defined for the purposes of California's integrated English-language arts assessment, is the process of constructing meaning through transactions with text. In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes responsibility for producing an interpretation of a text guided not only by the language of the text but also by the associations, cultural experiences, and knowledge that the reader brings to the interpretive task. Rather than believing that meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and the distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

To assess a student's performance in reading is therefore not only to assess the richness and plausibility of the meaning that the student produces but also the quality of the process through which meaning is produced. In some cases, students may be better readers than the evidence seems to show. Scorers must give credit for all evidence of the construction of meaning but, at the same time, be careful not to base a score on scorer-inferred meanings. Scorers will always be alert to graphic or written clues that show indications of reading performance. Scorers should also note that neither length of responses nor negative statements about the assessment provide information about the quality of the reading performance. Frustration, confidence and boredom may manifest at any level.

A score should not be lowered by a chance or occasional misreading of a word, phrase, or fact in a test performance that would otherwise demonstrate a higher level of reading performance. Similarly, the scorer must credit an interpretation that is supported by plausible reasons and/or references to the text, even though the interpretation may differ from the scorer's own expectations.

When two passages are paired, one more complex than the other, the best readers interpret both passages and explore implications of the pairing. Less able or emerging readers may be less successful at handling the complexities of the more difficult passage and usually focus on the more accessible one. Looking carefully at the responses to both passages gives scorers multiple opportunities to rate the overall performance. For the purposes of this assessment, when two selections are used, they both serve as the basis for the reading assessment.

Although scorers will score every paper that has any evidence of the construction of meaning, they have two options in addition to score points six through one:

No Response will be given to papers that have no evidence of the construction of any meaning from a reading of the text.

Unscored will be assigned to papers that

1. Are written in a language other than English
2. Are undecipherable because of illegible handwriting
3. Are limited only to underlined words or question marks or statements such as "I don't understand"
4. Have what appear to be idle or irrelevant doodlings or markings on the paper (This option is to be exercised only when there is no perceptible relevance to the text(s) in the prompt. If the text is a story that includes a dog sled race and the student draws a picture of a track event, for example, assuming that there is no other evidence available on the test, the paper would receive a score point one. The picture shows a personal connection at least to the

word *race* in the text; such a connection shows the student is responding at the decoding level, which is a score point one.)

While every effort has been made to construct a reading assessment approach that gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their ability to construct meaning from interacting with given texts, it is important to emphasize that each individual reading score represents the reading achievement of a particular student on a specific day, reading given texts for assessment purposes. No students should be labeled as a "three reader" or a "five reader" on the basis of any single assessment.

Complex factors that affect student responses include the following:

- The purpose of the reading, as established by the prompt and perhaps modified by the student's own needs as established by his or her relationship to the text
- The nature of the questions and activities in the prompt
- Previous experience with the text type or with the subject of the text

Reading Performances

Effective readers *connect* with, *reflect* on, and *challenge* the text. Readers do not need to show evidence of all the performances listed here. The discerning and insightful reader may display a broad spectrum of reading behaviors or may investigate a few selected behaviors in great depth. The exemplary reader may show variety, complexity, breadth, and/or depth. Through their writing and graphics, these readers show convincing evidence of their ability to construct meaning. They may

1. Experiment with ideas; think divergently; take risks; express opinions (e.g., speculate, hypothesize, explore alternative scenarios; raise questions; make predictions; think metaphorically).
2. Explore multiple possibilities of meaning; see cultural and/or psychological nuances and complexities in the text.
3. Fill in gaps; use clues and evidence in the passage to draw conclusions; make plausible interpretations of ideas, facts, concepts, and/or arguments.
4. Recognize and deal with ambiguities in the text.
5. Revise, reshape and/or deepen early interpretations.
6. Evaluate; examine the degree of fit between the author's ideas or information and the reader's prior knowledge or experience.
7. Challenge the text(s) by agreeing or disagreeing, arguing, endorsing, questioning, and/or wondering.
8. Demonstrate understanding of the work as a whole.
9. Show sensitivity to the structure of the text(s): how the parts work together; how characters and/or other elements of the work(s) change.
10. Show aesthetic appreciation of the text(s); see linguistic and structural complexities.
11. Allude to and/or retell specific passage(s) to validate and/or expand ideas.
12. Make connections between the text(s) and their own ideas, experiences, and knowledge
13. Demonstrate emotional engagement with the text(s).
14. Retell, summarize, and/or paraphrase with purpose.
15. Reflect on the meaning(s) of the text(s), including larger or more universal significance; express a major understanding about or insight into a subject, an aspect of self, or of life in general.

Score Point 6 – Exemplary Reading Performance

An exemplary reading performance is insightful, discerning, and perceptive as the reader constructs and reflects on meaning in a text. Readers at this level are sensitive to linguistic, structural, cultural, and psychological nuances and complexities. They fill in gaps in a text, making plausible assumptions about unstated causes or motivations, or drawing meaning from subtle cues. They differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They recognize real or seeming contradictions, exploring possibilities for their resolution or tolerating ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole.

Readers achieving score point six develop connections with and among texts. They connect their understanding of the text not only to their own ideas, experience, and knowledge, but to their history as participants in a culture or larger community, often making connections to other texts or other works of art. Exceptional readers draw on evidence from the text to generate, validate, expand, and reflect on their own ideas.

These readers take risks. They entertain challenging ideas and explore multiple possibilities of meaning as they read, grounding these meanings in their acute perceptions of textual and cultural complexities. They often revise their understanding of a text as they re-read and as additional information or insight becomes available to them. They sometimes articulate a newly developed level of understanding.

Readers demonstrating a score point six performance challenge the text. They carry on an internal dialogue with the writer, raising questions, taking exception, agreeing, disagreeing, appreciating or objecting to text features. They may test the validity of the author's ideas, information, and/or logic by considering the authority of the author and the nature and quality of the author's source(s). They frequently suggest ways of rewriting the text, speculating about the ideology or cultural or historical biases that seem to inform a text, sometimes recognizing and embracing and sometimes resisting the ideological position that a text seems to construct for its reader.

Score Point 5 – Discerning Reading Performance

A reading performance at score point five is discerning, thorough, and perceptive, but will probably show somewhat less insight or sensitivity to nuances and complexities of text than an exemplary reading. These readers are able to fill in gaps in a text, making plausible assumptions from subtle cues; but they engage in these operations with less acuteness of vision than more expert readers. They recognize and differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They recognize real or seeming contradictions, exploring possibilities for their resolution or tolerating ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole.

Readers achieving score point five see connections between their own lives and the world of the text. They connect their understanding of the text not only to their own ideas, experience, and knowledge, but to their history as participants in a culture or community. They often make connections to other texts or other works of art; these connections, while always purposeful and connected to the text, may be more predictable than those made by exceptional readers. They also draw on evidence from the text to generate, validate, expand, and reflect on their own ideas.

These readers may explore multiple possibilities of meaning. While they may form firm interpretations early in their reading, they are open to revising their ideas as additional information or insight becomes available to them. They sometimes articulate newly developed levels of understanding.

Readers performing at this level challenge the text. They pose questions, postulate answers, take exception, agree, disagree, speculate; however, the questions and/or issues they raise may not be as insightful or perceptive as those of the reader demonstrating an exemplary reading.

Score Point 4 – Thoughtful Reading Performance

Readers at score point four construct a thoughtful and plausible interpretation of a text. They fill in some gaps in a text, making assumptions about unstated causes or motivations or drawing meaning from cues in the text. They usually differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They may recognize real or seeming contradictions, but are sometimes distracted by these contradictions and by ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work.

Readers achieving score point four develop connections with and among texts. They usually connect their understanding of the text to their own experience and knowledge and sometimes to other texts. When directed, these readers may generate, validate, expand, and/or reflect on their ideas about the text, but with less depth than in a score point five or six response. These readers tend to paraphrase or retell, often thoroughly and purposefully. They also see, however, a more general significance in or wider application of the literal facts of the text.

These readers, while confident, rarely take risks. They accept the text without exploring multiple possibilities of meaning. They tend to present their understanding of a text as fixed and rarely revise their interpretation as they re-read and as additional information becomes available.

Readers demonstrating this level of reading performance sometimes challenge or question the text. They may raise questions and may agree or disagree without explaining their reactions.

Score Point 3 – Literal Reading Performance

Students performing at score point three are literal readers, constructing a plausible but superficial interpretation of a text. They show little sensitivity to nuances and complexities.

These readers develop few or no connections with or among texts. Sometimes they connect the text associationally with personal experience, but the connection is generally superficial and unexamined.

Score point three readers are not risk takers. They show little tolerance for textual difficulties or lack of closure. Confronted by textual complexity, they are inclined to ignore the difficulties. Their reading process tends not to be recursive: having made some initial sense of the text, they are inclined to retain their view without testing or revising it.

Readers at the score point three level of reading performance rarely challenge the text or carry on an internal dialogue with the writer. If they raise questions at all the questions will be largely unproductive expressions of frustration or low level inquiries (i.e., about word meanings). Any expressed appreciations or criticisms are likely to be simplistic.

Score Point 2 – Limited Reading Performance

A limited reading performance indicates that readers at score point two construct partial and reductive meanings for a text. Responses of some readers suggest that they may not have been able to read the whole text. Others are unable to see the text as a whole and tend to focus on one or two ideas or segments of the text.

Readers within this range of performance develop few or no connections with texts. They may, as they recognize some idea, continue to write or draw, but their responses will appear to have only a tangential relevance to the text.

These readers seldom ask questions of a text or offer meaningful evaluations of what they read. They tend to abandon or become entangled in difficult sections of a text.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Reading Performance

In a minimal reading performance, the reader appears to understand and respond only to an individual word, title, and/or phrase but not to respond in ways that demonstrate even a rudimentary understanding of how these words relate to text ideas.

Any connections such readers may make to their own experience will appear in the form of words or drawings that have textual associations only to an isolated word or phrase.

Level-one reader responses suggest that these students engage in reading largely as an act of decoding rather than as a process of making coherent meaning.

Sample Student Papers
High School Reading

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance

Section One
Reading

"Story of an Hour"

Before You Read

You are going to read "Story of an Hour," a short story written by Kate Chopin at the beginning of the twentieth century. After you read the story, you will be responding to questions and activities that show what you think and feel about it.

Reading Situation

Read the story by Kate Chopin. Make notes of your questions and reactions as you read. You may underline phrases or passages you think are memorable or important.

Story of an Hour	Notes/Response
Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.	
It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.	
She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.	She was so shoked that her husbing was gone forever.

Chopin, Kate. "Story of an Hour" in *Focus on Literature: America.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Publishers, 1981.

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in it dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

She began to realize it wouldn't be so bad not havin him around.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will — as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "Free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She was now free to be her own person.

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him — sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door — you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

Her love had desenegpte over the years and suddenly It Struck her She had noone to answer to and She could be the person She wanted to be

She wanted to start a new and better life for herself

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Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease — of joy that kills.

Joy That kills She Realized The freedom was gone and no long would she Ever expe life the way she had before. The doctors also didnt realize that she really was sad her hus. had come back.

Writing About Your Reading

1. What is your first response to the story? Take a few minutes to write down any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

My first response to this story is that at first this woman is grieving that her husband has died but then she realizes that she could live for herself so she was happy. My first response is that she is cruel for being happy her husband has died. I think that maybe her husband had limited the things she was able to do and limited her life to suit him. For this reason I'm glad she can finally be free. Did he beat her?

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

2. Below is a double entry journal. In the left column, copy short passages from the story that seem intriguing, interesting, or relate to your life in some way. In the right column, write your responses to the passages you have selected. Your responses might indicate what the passage means, what it reminds you of, what you don't understand, how you feel about it, or any other comments that seem appropriate.

   Remember, copy the passage or quotation on the top of the left column and write your comments directly opposite in the right column. Then, copy your next passage and write your response opposite, etc.

Passage from the story	Response to the passage
She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same with a paralyzed inability with sudden, wild adendoment in her sisters arms, And yet she loved him sometimes.	When she found out the news Do her husbands death she was so shocked That she fell into her sisters arms (which probally means she fainted) If he controled everything she did I could see why she would sometimes doubt her love toward him.
What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being "Free! Body and Soul free!" She kept whistering	love is a very strong emotion and it can control your life. The death of a loved one is probally the worst news you will ever hear so when Mrs. Mallard is experiencing self-assertion you can tell that she is not so sad the husbn death. No longer was her around to control ther life, She was now able to be her own person and do what she wants with her life which I think is very important and I feel you should be the one to control your own life.

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Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

3. There were several important events in the story. Select the one event you feel is most important and explain why you feel this way.

The event I feel is the most impotant in this story is when she realizes that since her husband is dead, she can be the person she wants to be with no one to tell her otherwise. It seems to me that Mrs. Mallard was a strong willed woman who didn't need or appreciate someone to watch over her. Now that her husband had died, she could do the things she had always wanted to that maybe her husband wouldn't have let her do or things she wouldn't do because she felt obligated to be with her husband. Though it dosen't say in the story, I feel that Mr. Mallord maybe suffecated Mrs. Mallard so much that when she finally could come up for air because the blanket (which is Mr. Mallor had come off of her she never wanted to go back living the same way. As she said it best "I'm free".

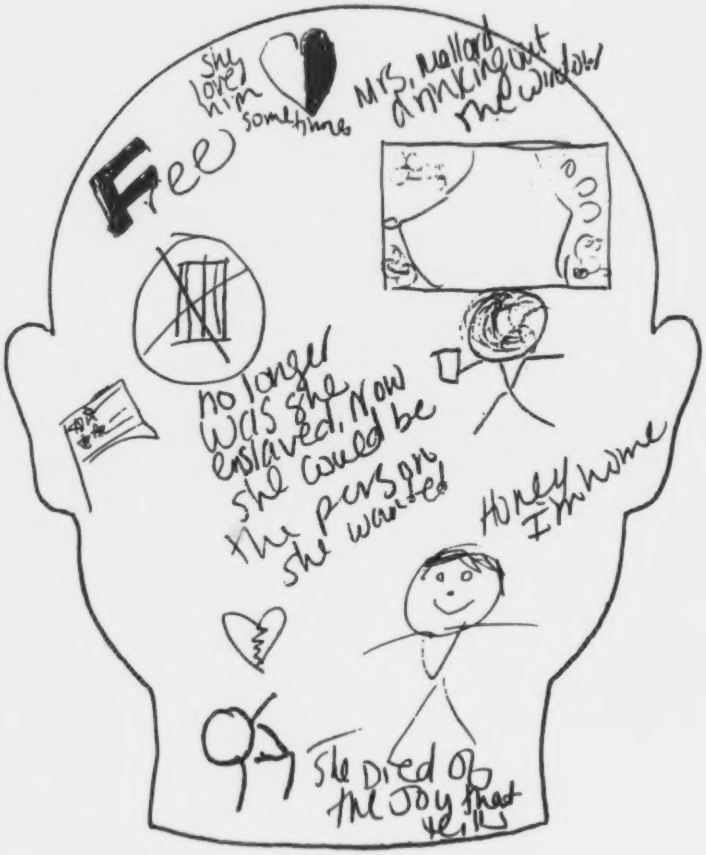
Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

4. Look at the ideas you have generated so far. Now, imagine that you are Mrs. Mallard.

   Below is an "open mind" diagram, a way of making a visual representation of what a character might be thinking or feeling at a particular time. In order to understand Mrs. Mallard more fully, create an "open mind" for her. Inside the drawing, fill in symbols, images, words, phrases, or any combination of these which represent what Mrs. Mallard was thinking and feeling as she was "drinking a very elixir of life through that open window."

   Note: an elixir is a liquid substance which people used to believe would prolong life. It means "the embodiment of perfection."

Open Mind for Mrs. Mallard


she loved him somethime
Mrs. Mallard drinking out the window
Free
no longer was she enslaved, now she could be the person she wanted
Honey I'm home
She Died of the Joy that kills

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

5. Write an explanation of the meaning of the symbols, images, words, or phrases which you included in your open mind and explain why you chose them.

Some of the symbols I choose represented freedom. When I hear the word freedom the first image that always pops into my head is the American Flag. I also often think about a jail. Mrs. Mallard seemed to be locked in her own personal jail and now that her husband was dead it was like someone had set her free. I also showed Mrs. Mallard drinking at her window because it was a sign in the story that she wanted to live a long time and do everything she wasn't aple to do when he was alive. Finally I drew a heart that had been broken when Mr Mallard walked in the door. Goodbye freedom. Mrs Mallard collasped on the floor and had died from the "Joy that kills."

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

6. Discuss the transformation that Mrs. Mallard undergoes as the story moves forward. Explain in the space below.

What the character first thought	What the character finally thought	How do you explain the change?
He's gone I so sad	Yippe he's gone, Freedom!	She realized that he had limited her to what She could and Couldnt do
I'm so depressed? he's gone I want to die to,	as she's staring out the window I want to stay alive as long as possible to be able to do the things I've never done before	She realized she would start a new life and be happy
He's dead I finally get to live life for myself	(as he walks in the door) there goes my freedom. and dies.	When he walks in the door She realizes that life will never be the same again and she didn't want to go back and live that way again

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Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(concluded)*

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

This story means to me that marriages often fail. It makes me realze why half of the marriages in California end in divorces. It is sad but true, people often either get sick of each other or maybe they don't give each other enough space to communicate their feelings. This story makes me think of my friends parents who ended their relationship in a divorce. They could just no longer live with each other. They both felt trapped and felt they couldn't communicate with each other.

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary on High-range Reading Performance

Readers demonstrating high achievement are discerning, thorough, and perceptive as they construct and reflect on meaning in a text. These readers read actively, making plausible assumptions from subtle cues, and connecting their understanding of the text to their own experiences, and to other texts and/or works of art. In this high-range paper the reader has an initial understanding and allows the meaning to grow and develop throughout the paper. In the Open Mind (question four), the reader clearly connects the world of the text to the larger world, evidencing a deepening of her appreciation of the text itself; and the reader closes with a final personal reflection emerging from the text.

Although largely paraphrasing the text, the student's margin notes show the reader's engagement with and basic understanding of the text ("She was so shocked that her husband was gone forever," "She wanted to start a new and better life for herself"). She develops this understanding in the initial response activity (question one), beginning with a paraphrase of the story but moving to speculations ("I think that maybe her husband had limited the things she was able to do . . .") and questioning ("Did he beat her?").

The reader's choice of passages for the double entry journal and her responses to those passages (question 2) continues to show her interaction with the text. Her understanding grows stronger and more certain as she moves through her responses to her chosen quotations. She moves from a literal understanding ("which probably means she fainted") to challenging speculations about the subtleties of the text ("If he controlled everything . . . I could see why she would sometimes doubt her love . . ."). Finally, she moves to a strongly stated empathetic understanding of Mrs. Mallard's responses ("She was now able to be her own person").

In her response to question three, the reader continues to develop and solidify the ideas that surfaced in her double entry journal. Her opinions strengthen as she speculates about Mrs. Mallard's character ("a strong willed woman who didn't need . . . someone to watch over her . . ."). She continues to develop her understanding both of the Mallards' relationship ("I feel that Mr. Mallard maybe suffocated Mrs. Mallard . . .") and of the ending of that relationship (". . . when she finally could come up for air . . . she never wanted to go back"). Here the reader again returns to the text, quoting Mrs. Mallard ("I'm Free") to validate her responses.

The reader's explanation of the symbols in the Open Mind (question four) illustrates her deepening appreciation for the story and the way the story is constructed. Although the meaning of "the joy that kills" is not literally explicated in the story, the reader clearly understands and empathizes with Mrs. Mallard's responses.

In her explanation of the symbols in the Open Mind, the reader returns to the text, developing this understanding and continually strengthening and validating ideas with specifics ("I also showed Mrs. Mallard drinking at her window because it was a sign in the story that she wanted to live a long time . . ."; "I drew a heart that had been broken when Mr. Mallard walks in the door. Goodbye freedom"). This line of response is continued in the "transformation" activity (question six) in which the reader continues to show her understanding of the text and her active engagement with it.

Finally, in her last response the reader reflects upon the meaning of the story, extending from it ("It makes me realize why half of the marriages in California end in divorces") and reflecting personally on it ("This story makes me think of my friend's parents who ended their relationship in a divorce . . . They both felt trapped . . ."). In this final response we see how far the student has moved from her initial response. The student's engagement with the text, her continual challenging of its ideas, her return to the text for validation of her developing ideas, and her personal extensions from the text clearly mark this as an example of a high-range reading performance.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance

Section One
Reading

"Story of an Hour"

Before You Read

You are going to read "Story of an Hour," a short story written by Kate Chopin at the beginning of the twentieth century. After you read the story, you will be responding to questions and activities that show what you think and feel about it.

Reading Situation

Read the story by Kate Chopin. Make notes of your questions and reactions as you read. You may underline phrases or passages you think are memorable or important.

Story of an Hour	Notes/Response
Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death. It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message. She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.	What does inability mean? notable

Chopin, Kate. "Story of an Hour" in *Focus on Literature: America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Publishers, 1981.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

full

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in it dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will — as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

3) When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "Free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

4 There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him — sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door — you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

2) Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease — of joy that kills.

Writing About Your Reading

1. What is your first response to the story? Take a few minutes to write down any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

My first response was sadness for Mrs. Mallard thinking her husband was dead. But in the end I was suprised that he was still alive but again I'm sad for she is now dead.

There are many words I didn't understand. Most I figured out myself but a few like importunities and bespoke expression I couldn't figure out. Do you know what it means?

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

2. Below is a double entry journal. In the left column, copy short passages from the story that seem intriguing, interesting, or relate to your life in some way. In the right column, write your responses to the passages you have selected. Your responses might indicate what the passage means, what it reminds you of, what you don't understand, how you feel about it, or any other comments that seem appropriate.

   Remember, copy the passage or quotation on the top of the left column and write your comments directly opposite in the right column. Then, copy your next passage and write your response opposite, etc.

Passage from the story	Response to the passage
1.) "She knew that she would weap again when she kind tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked saved with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome."	This passage is significant to me for she (Mrs. Mallard) was at peace with his death. She knew what was to come in the future and instead of turning her back on it, she opened her arms and "welcomed" it. Very few people would do this. If it were me in this situation I'd probably be the one to dwell on the past and totally block off the future. I'd fall into an unrecoverable hole.
2.) "He (Mr. Mallard) . . . . wife." "But . . . . late."	The ending was terribly saddening how everything was coming back together. For that one moment life was the greatest for them. Then she had to go. It was terribly saddening

Student Reading Response - Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

3. There were several important events in the story. Select the one event you feel is most important and explain why you feel this way.

I believe the most important event in this story was the end where Mrs. Mallard dies. I ask myself "- of joy that kills." Was she happy when she found he was alive (like I thought at first) or was it of saddness because he was alive and she wasn't free anymore.

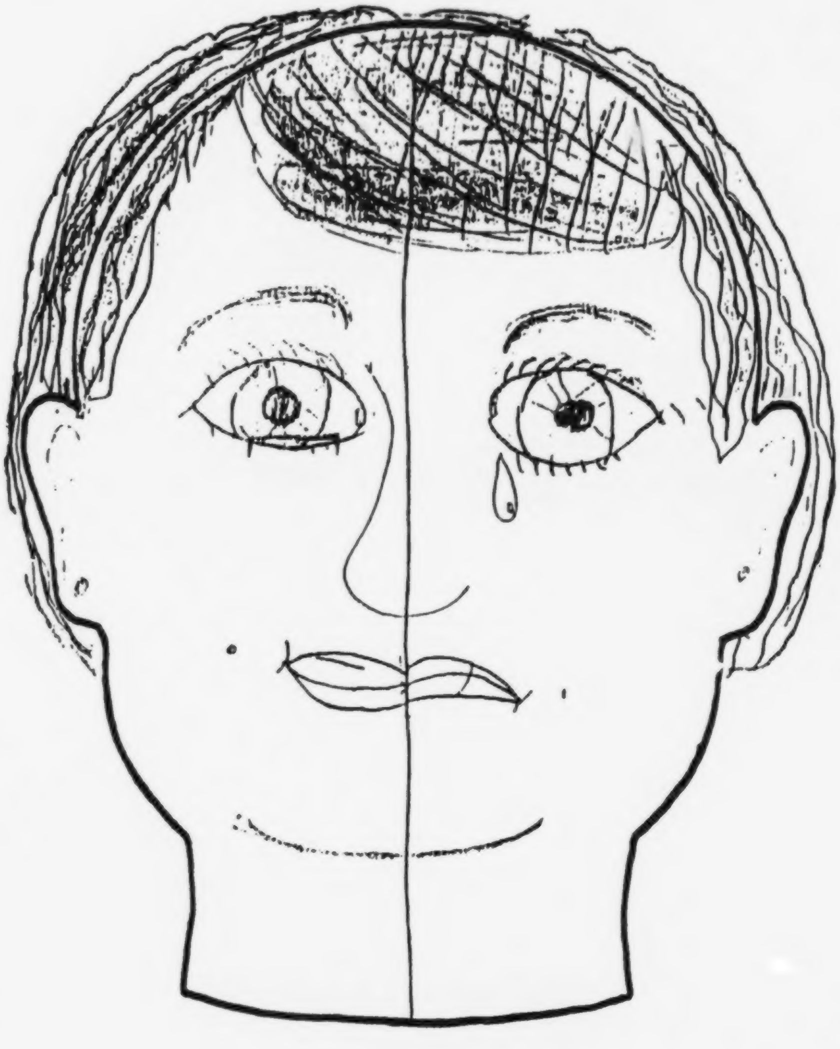
Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

4. Look at the ideas you have generated so far. Now, imagine that you are Mrs. Mallard.

   Below is an "open mind" diagram, a way of making a visual representation of what a character might be thinking or feeling at a particular time. In order to understand Mrs. Mallard more fully, create an "open mind" for her. Inside the drawing, fill in symbols, images, words, phrases, or any combination of these which represent what Mrs. Mallard was thinking and feeling as she was "drinking a very elixir of life through that open window."

   Note: an elixir is a liquid substance which people used to believe would prolong life. It means "the embodiment of perfection."

Open Mind for Mrs. Mallard



Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

5. Write an explanation of the meaning of the symbols, images, words, or phrases which you included in your open mind and explain why you chose them.

I have drawn a woman who is 1/2 happy 1/2 sad. At first Mrs. Mallard was sad about Mr mallard's death. Then when she started thinking she became happier that he was now dead. She seems to be 2 faced so I drew her that way.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

6. Discuss the transformation that Mrs. Mallard undergoes as the story moves forward. Explain in the space below.

What the character first thought	What the character finally thought	How do you explain the change?
She was sad because her husband died.	She knew she would be free from her husband so she was happy in a way	This means she truly didn't love him.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(concluded)*

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

My understanding of the story is that Mrs. Mallard is a confusing woman. There were so many twists and turns in this story its hard to keep up. I enjoyed the story though because it makes me think about life. Are there many people like her?

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary on Mid-range Reading Performance

This reader, exemplifying a mid-range performance, begins by presenting a strong literal reading of the text but reconsiders her own initial reading and progresses to a somewhat more thoughtful interpretation.

In her response to question one the reader tells of her initial reactions (sadness, surprise, sadness) to the major narrative events of the story. She also notes (as her marginal comments demonstrate) that she had trouble understanding some of the vocabulary of the story; but again she demonstrates an admirable and thoughtful tenacity, noting that she "figured out myself" most of the words that initially stumped her.

In question two we see this reader constructing a personal connection to the text as she first observes that Mrs. Mallard "welcomed" her future as a widow but then goes on to reflect on how she herself might cope with a similar loss: "If it were me in this situation . . . ."

Mid-range readers characteristically provide strong literal interpretations of a text and are frequently able to fill in gaps in the surface structure of the story line by drawing inferences from available cues. The strongest mid-range readers will also reflect thoughtfully on the meaning they construct for a text and find in it a wider or more universally applicable significance. This reader begins by attending to the surface facts of the story, but in her response to question three, she begins to question her own initial superficial interpretation by asking herself about the meaning of the last line of the story that she identifies as the most important of the story: "I ask myself'—of joy that kills.' Was she happy when she found he was alive (like I thought at first) or was it of sadness because he was alive and she wasn't free anymore." In questions four and five, the reader continues to explore, if not explain, the paradoxes she notices in Mrs. Mallard's shifting emotional states, representing Mrs. Mallard graphically with a divided countenance, half crying and half happy and then explaining superficially that Mrs. Mallard was first sad and then became happier that her husband was dead and that Mrs. Mallard "seems to be 2 faced."

In question six, however, when the reader has the opportunity to trace the changes in Mrs. Mallard's feelings, she is able to reflect on the significance of those changes, explaining, first, that Mrs. Mallard "knew she was free from her husband and so she was happy in a way" and then concluding with the plausible, if somewhat reductive speculation that "this means she didn't truly love him." Unfortunately, this line of thinking is not examined further, as the reader offers (in response to the final question) a simplistic summary account of her understanding of the story in the reductive description of Mrs. Mallard as "a confusing woman."

This reader presents what is in many ways an admirably literate response to a complex literary text. She begins with confusion about much of the vocabulary of the text but sticks with the text to figure out most of the unfamiliar terms. She also starts out with a superficial and confused interpretation of the story but turns her confusion into questions that allow her to construct a more penetrating and complex meaning structure, even if the reader continues to regard the main character of the story as confusing. Altogether then, while this does quite qualify as a high-range performance, it is an encouraging example of a strong mid-range response.

Student Reading Response - Low-range Performance

Section One
Reading

"Story of an Hour"

Before You Read

You are going to read "Story of an Hour," a short story written by Kate Chopin at the beginning of the twentieth century. After you read the story, you will be responding to questions and activities that show what you think and feel about it.

Reading Situation

Read the story by Kate Chopin. Make notes of your questions and reactions as you read. You may underline phrases or passages you think are memorable or important.

Story of an Hour

Notes/Response

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

Chopin, Kate. "Story of an Hour" in *Focus on Literature: America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Publishers, 1981.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in it dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will — as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "Free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him — sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door — you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

Notes/Response

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease — of joy that kills.

Writing About Your Reading

1. What is your first response to the story? Take a few minutes to write down any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

The story was a little deep and sad. In some parts, I got lost and confused. But overall, it was an alright story.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

2. Below is a double entry journal. In the left column, copy short passages from the story that seem intriguing, interesting, or relate to your life in some way. In the right column, write your responses to the passages you have selected. Your responses might indicate what the passage means, what it reminds you of, what you don't understand, how you feel about it, or any other comments that seem appropriate.

   Remember, copy the passage or quotation on the top of the left column and write your comments directly opposite in the right column. Then, copy your next passage and write your response opposite, etc.

Passage from the story	Response to the passage
She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.	I don't understand what this at all.
When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease - of joy that kills.	This passage was hard to understand because of the last words.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

3. There were several important events in the story. Select the one event you feel is most important and explain why you feel this way.

When Mrs. Mallard died. She struggled, and she died.

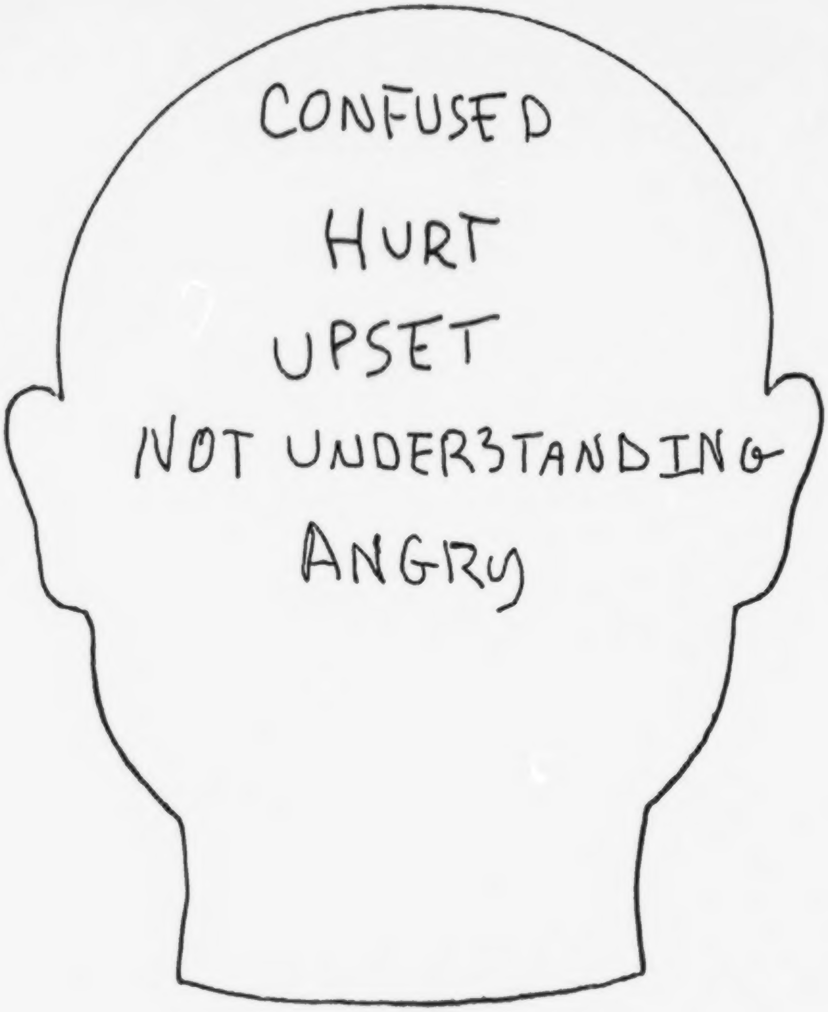
Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

4. Look at the ideas you have generated so far. Now, imagine that you are Mrs. Mallard.

   Below is an "open mind" diagram, a way of making a visual representation of what a character might be thinking or feeling at a particular time. In order to understand Mrs. Mallard more fully, create an "open mind" for her. Inside the drawing, fill in symbols, images, words, phrases, or any combination of these which represent what Mrs. Mallard was thinking and feeling as she was "drinking a very elixir of life through that open window."

   Note: an elixir is a liquid substance which people used to believe would prolong life. It means "the embodiment of perfection."

Open Mind for Mrs. Mallard



CONFUSED

HURT

UPSET

NOT UNDERSTANDING

ANGRY

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

5. Write an explanation of the meaning of the symbols, images, words, or phrases which you included in your open mind and explain why you chose them.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

6. Discuss the transformation that Mrs. Mallard undergoes as the story moves forward. Explain in the space below.

What the character first thought	What the character finally thought	How do you explain the change?
She was upset at first.	She knew she was going to die, she became recentful.	She couldn't except the fact she was going to die

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(concluded)*

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

This story was weiid. I was confused most of the time, and couldn't understand what was happening

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary on Low-range Reading Performance

Readers demonstrating low-range performance are barely able to construct a plausible meaning for the text, and the meanings they do construct tend to be superficial and reductive, focusing on only one idea or a segment of the text. In this low-range paper, the reader makes an attempt to move into the text but seems unable to comprehend even the literal level of the story. In the first response to the text, the student voices confusion ("I got lost and confused"); and, although he does select quotations from the story for the double entry journal in question two, the responses to the quotations continue to express confusion and a lack of understanding ("I don't understand . . . ." and "This passage was hard to understand because of the last words").

The reader develops a partial meaning of the text in response to question three, selecting an event from the story ("when Mrs. Mallard died . . .") and in question six he explores Mrs. Mallard's transformation ("She couldn't except the fact she was going to die"). However, these responses continue to show the reader's confusion about the basic storyline and reflect the fuzziness of his understanding. Although the student tries to complete the Open Mind, filling in a series of isolated words ("confused, hurt, upset, not understanding, angry"), we have the feeling that these might reflect his own feelings about the story rather than reflecting an understanding of the character's feelings about her situation. In his explanation of these words, the student reiterates his own frustration at being "confused most of the time."

We have the feeling that if the student went on, continuing to question the text and to respond to it, he might begin to develop his understanding; however, at this point the student seems unable to risk the questioning and interaction with the text that so often are catalysts for the construction of meaning. The reader is unable to connect to the story or to make personal connections that extend from it. This response really stops at the "I don't understand this" level, and is an example of a low-range reading performance.

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III. High School Writing Assessment

The writing types which have been assessed previously in grade twelve will now be assessed at grade ten. When the assessment reaches full implementation, the eight types of writing identified for high school will include: autobiographical incident, controversial issue, evaluation, interpretation, observational writing, reflective essay, report of information, and speculation about causes and effects.

Only four types will be included in the spring 1993 writing assessment:

- Autobiographical Incident
- Interpretation
- Reflective Essay
- Speculation about Causes and Effects

Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide for Autobiographical Incident

In autobiographical incident, writers tell a story from their personal experiences. Besides narrating an incident, writers tell readers what it has meant to them. This seems simple enough: writers narrate a single remembered incident and say why it was (is still) important to them. The best writers remind us, however, that writing an autobiographical incident is far from simple.

The best writers orient readers to the incident, present the scene and other people who were present, and then tell a story that may include dialogue, movement or gestures, names of people or objects, and sensory details. Writers describe their feelings, understandings, or reflections at the time of the incident; they may also evaluate the incident from their present perspective, implying or stating its significance in their lives. The best writers use many strategies, selecting those appropriate to the writing situation. The challenge in writing autobiographical incidents is both to select appropriate strategies and to use them in a stylistically effective way.

While the *rhetorical* aspect of the assessment focuses on the distinctive features of writing types, the *effectiveness* aspect guides us to look carefully at the more comprehensive features of coherence and style. Coherence, a sense of organization, flow, and focus, is essential to all good writing. The coherent essay has a clear direction, each section flowing naturally from the preceding one. Coherence is demonstrated to readers through emphasis, organization, and repetition achieved through recurrences of language, syntax, and ideas. Style, for the purposes of this assessment, is observable in two written language features: (1) *sentence control*, and (2) *word choice* or *diction*. In assessment of the effectiveness of style, the primary considerations are *appropriateness*, *precision*, and *control*.

Score Point 6 – Exceptional Achievement

Incident. The writer of a six-point essay tells a coherent and engaging story. The narrative moves irresistibly toward a compelling and satisfying realization for both the writer and the reader. The narrative tells readers what they need to know to understand what happened and provides details to help readers infer its effect on the writer. The writer of a six-point essay effectively uses a variety of the following strategies with sophistication and control:

- Naming (specific names of people or objects, quantities, numbers)
- Visual details of scene, objects, or people (size, colors, shapes, features, dress)
- Sounds or smells of the scene
- Specific narrative action (movements, gestures, expressions)
- Dialogue
- Interior monologue
- Pacing: accelerating the pace to accommodate time or mood changes or slowing the pace to elaborate the central moment in the incident
- Suspense, tension, or surprise
- Comparison or contrast to other scenes or people
- Expression of remembered feelings or insights at the time of the incident

Context. The writer locates the incident in a particular physical or psychological setting, orienting the reader to scene, people, and events and providing background or context for the incident. By using carefully chosen details relevant to the incident, the writer goes beyond simply identifying or pointing to the scene or people.

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Some writers may devote considerable space in the essay to orienting readers but not at the expense of a well-told incident. Other writers may focus so compellingly on the details of the incident that the context is presented briefly rather than developed elaborately. Thus, a six-point essay finds a balance between static context and movement into the dramatic, narrated incident.

Significance. In a six-point essay we know the writer's attitude toward the incident. The essay reveals why the incident was important to the writer. This significance can be either implied or stated. If it is implied, word choice and sensory detail allow the reader to infer it confidently. It may be stated in the writer's insights at the time of the incident or in reflections from the writer's present perspective. These insights and reflections are subtly integrated into the narration and may be further clarified as a conclusion to the essay.

Score Point 5 – Commendable Achievement

Incident. As in a six-point essay, the incident is coherent and engaging. The five-point essay may rely on a narrower range of narrative strategies, or it may use a variety of strategies less effectively. A five-point essay may be structurally more predictable than a six-point one, and it may be less focused than a six-point essay. Still, the writer of a five-point essay tells a clear, engaging story.

Context. The five-point essay contains appropriate and adequate context, as does a six-point essay. The context does not dominate the essay at the expense of the incident.

Significance. The attitude and impact of the situation can be either implied or stated but will be clear, either through remembered insights or present reflections. The insights may be less well integrated into the essay than in a six-point essay, more often appearing at the end. The insights may not be as perceptive or as probing as in a six-point paper, but still they will not be superficial.

Score Point 4 – Adequate Achievement

Incident. The essay is a well-told incident but may lack the coherence and command of a five-point essay. There may be digressions, but the story comes back on track quickly. There is also a limited use of strategies.

Context. The context is adequate to orient readers to the incident. The balance among incident, context, and significance may seem awkward.

Significance. Attitude and impact may be implied or stated. Insights may be predictable and/or may seem only tacked on to the incident.

Score Point 3 – Some Evidence of Achievement

Incident. The essay does relate an incident. However, a series of events may be presented as an incident. The overall story is competently told. There is also a very limited use of narrative strategies.

Context. The context is out of balance with the incident and significance. The essay may devote too much space to context—generalizing and philosophizing—while neglecting the narrative. Or it may begin abruptly without necessary orientation.

Significance. The attitude and impact are briefly stated or implied to some degree. We know why the incident was memorable, although insights may be predictable, superficial, or even illogical.

Score Point 2 – Limited Evidence of Achievement

Incident. The essay may relate an incident without context or significance, or it may mention that incident only briefly without focusing on details. If the incident is longer, it is not competently told. The details may be sketchy, rambling, fragmentary, or irrelevant.

Context. There is confusion among incident, context, and significance; one becomes the other. The context may be limited or even missing, or the essay may focus entirely on context at the expense of the incident.

Significance. The essay has little or no statement of attitude or impact. What insight there is seems superficial.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Evidence of Achievement

The writer of the one-point essay incompetently responds to the prompt and omits one of the characteristics. It may be confusing and garbled.

Incident. The essay may refer vaguely to an event without identifying it specifically, it may only imply an incident in the context, or it may not mention an incident at all. The essay may focus on others instead of the writer.

Context and Significance. Since there is little or no incident, the essay becomes all context or significance. The writer may ramble on about the subject of the prompt or may philosophize on lessons learned.

Score Point 0 – Inappropriate Response

Off topic or unscorable.

Sample Student Papers
Autobiographical Incident

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

I love sunflower seeds. Ever since I was a wee babe, I've loved them. We didn't really eat them very often (perhaps that's why I [illegible] liked them so much) but whenever my grandmother would come and visit, she had a little packet of sunflower seeds with her, for me. She called me ~~a~~ her little bird (yes, I know that's rather corny) but I didn't mind.

An a cold day in 1980 (I don't remember the exact date, but I know it was cold, and it was snowing) our whole family ~~we~~ went to do our shopping in town. We lived in a tiny town called Coon Rapids in Minnesota, [illegible] which boasted of the best supermarket around, the Red Owl.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

My brother and I explored the whole produce section while my parents picked some fruits and vegetables for the week. It was great fun to see the huge red apples piled so high I couldn't see the topmost apples. The smell of the fresh fruit and the dark greens of the vegetables were a perfect background for treasure hunting. For my little brother and I, ages 4 and 5 consecutively, the little bag ties were the most exciting treasures the produce section floor could offer. We bent them into little figures to play with, markers for hopscotch on the tile, or little projectiles to shoot at each other... the latter being the most frequently created.

We were, thereby, completely satisfied with our entertainment as our parents shopped, until we came to the little section devoted to nuts & beans.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

There, ever so close to my nose was a huge basin filled with sunflower seeds. Ah! Such temptation. I ran to my mother to ask if we could buy some, but she said that they were not good for me "Too much salt!", was her reason.

Back at the bean section, my brother was just starting ~~on~~ to bury the "bean-scooper", as we called it, in the basin of Pinto beans. As I ~~[illegible]~~ stuck my hands in the coolness of the Pinto beans, I looked up in time to see a woman near my sunflower seeds. She took a couple seeds, and popped them in her mouth before proceeding to put 2 shovelfuls in a bag to buy. I watched her leave, and then I casually ambled toward the basin. Trying to imitate the shopper, I took a couple, and ate them, then a couple more, and then a few more. My younger brother came to tell me

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

that we were leaving, and so I ~~hurr~~ hurriedly grabbed a handful and stuffed the seeds in my pocket.

The car seemed unusually quiet that day coming home. It was probably just my guilty conscience, but as I cracked the seeds in the car, the noise seemed ten times louder the more I tried to muffle it.

I don't know how, but my mom knew what I had done. At first, I tried to deny it, and I told her the seeds were from grandma, but she saw through me and gave me "the look." We had a very long conversation that day. I don't remember what she said to me, but I do remember ~~her~~ my mom's face. She looked so disappointed in me. I couldn't stand it. Yes, ~~that is~~ that is ~~[illegible]~~ the ~~two~~ things that I'll remember forever about that day, the look on her face.

Commentary on High-range Achievement Essay

From her first sentence ("I love sunflower seeds.") to her last (". . . the thing that I'll remember forever about that day, the look on her [mother's] face."), we witness a writer in full control of the techniques of autobiographical writing.

Her first two paragraphs deftly establish a context for her compelling story of childhood temptation. The incident itself is rich in detail: she is especially adept at reminding us of her feelings and insights at each moment in her story as she vividly describes the scene, the sights, sounds, smells and touch of the vegetable section of the market. Her pacing seems quite remarkable for a first-draft paper as she takes us from place to place in the store. Also, the contrast between the noise and hubbub of the stove and the silence in the car later on as she guiltily cracks open the sunflower seeds helps build this paper to a pleasing resolution. Her self revisions, evidenced by her crossing out and rewriting, suggests a writer keenly aware of the impact of just the right world or phrase for greater effect.

Her story writer's voice and seemingly natural sense of incident and strategies to bring the scene to life, as well as the nicely realized significance of the incident, all work together to produce a paper representing exceptional achievement.

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

Ominous music. Overhead scan. Below, in the small pool of light cast by it's headlights, a small station wagon slides through the sweltering desolation of the Mexican desert south of Tijuana. Inside the tiny five passenger car ~~eleven~~ nine people are draped, half dozing in a fatiged stupor, over the two bench seats. Two more lie in the back sleeping through pure exaughstion. I am eleven, having just passed my birthday. Already tall for my age I am crammed in the middle of the back bench seat with my knees drawn nearly to my chest. My forearms rest on my elevated knees and my head slumps foreward, occasionaly as the car hits a bump, my head jolts up and gazes around blearily. ~~The~~ It is just past four in the morning and the bare wasteland of sand is too uninteresting to hold my attention long. My head slumps foreward ~~[illegible]~~ again and I am lost to the world, and then, chaos.

There is a low pop, the sound of an underinflated balloon breaking; and my head jolts up. I stare uncomprehending as two lights gravitate from the left of the station wagon to dead ahead. I hear the diesal horn blaring and see ~~the~~ our driver franticly spinning the wheel. The lights ~~magic~~ majically

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

gravitate left again, and I realize only later, that we had just missed becoming a permanent part of a semi's radiator grill. Currently, I have other things to think about. Our driver tries desparately to bring the car back around but it is too late. With a grace that seems majestic the ungainly wagon sails down the two foot embankment to the highway. I am held aloft by inertia's mystical force as the car begins to roll around me. I hang, seemingly suspended in midair, as the car rolls completely over once and continues on to end up on it's side. Only now, as the car stops moving, do I come to rest, landing on my cousin and bouncing off the now vertical bench seat in front of me. The landing seems gentle, ~~as~~ compared with the smashing violence of a second before.

What happens to my aunt I do not know. Realizing only the urgency of my older cousin's order, "Get offa' me!" I wait impaitiently as his mother climbs out the door above us. It never occured to me to wonder where she landed; being on my opposite side logic states, as I landed on my cousin, so should she have landed on me.

Once outside we all scramble apprehensively away from the car, cinema inspired fear of vehicular explosion at the

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

forefront of our minds. A minute later a head count comes up two short. No one knows where my other two cousins are. We spend several tense minutes until the older, staggers up out of the darkness, and seconds later retrieves his younger brother.

We have all survived, unhurt save for a cut on the elbow of the cousin I landed on. It is literally a miracle. Not even the two thrown from the back of the car as it rolled are injured. Somehow, I and my uncle's family, along with the owner of the station wagon, had come through this major accident without a single injury requiring more than a band aid. We contemplate this for several minutes, and send a prayer of thanks up to a watching diety. Our next problem is finding a ride, for we are stranded along side a highway on the Mexican mainland, three hours by car to the border, and at least fifty miles of unbroken desert surrounding us on all sides. We gaze through the moonlight at the empty highway, no one seems to feel like talking. Having survied the night, we face a bleak morning

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Commentary on High-range Achievement Essay

It goes without saying that this is an engaging and well-told story. This writer immediately establishes both a physical and psychological setting in a few carefully chosen details, juxtaposing the crowded, moving car with the vast Mexican desert as well as the boy's sleepy, unfocused state with the "uncomprehending stare" as his head "jolts up" at the bursting of the car's tire.

The use of the present tense lends an air of immediacy to the incident. The writer incorporates to some degree each of the rhetorical strategies listed under score point six of the scoring guide, focusing primarily on the technique of interior monologue. We find ourselves inside the same car as it tumbles over and over: we scramble away as we "apprehensively," search for loved ones, and contemplate our good fortune.

The power of this story stems in great part from the genuine voice and style of an observant and sensitive young writer who writes with such confidence and economy that seems astounding—especially in a one-draft effort.

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Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

School was over and the school bus had just let us off at our stop. The group of us start home talking laughing and fooling around. As we approached the next street some of the group split to go their seperate ways to their houses. ~~all was left~~ All that were left in my group was me and two other kids.

As we rounded a corner in the street we saw that someone had just poured concrete and had roped off the area. As we approached it we all talked about writing in it or putting our foot print in it or leaving some kind of personal marking that would tell all of our presence their. But when we got to the cement ~~I was the one~~ no one did anything but told me that I should be the first one to do it. I didn't think about it but just stuck my foot in it and walked to the other side leaving my shoe prints to.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

dry in the cement. ~~Right when I got threw~~ ~~a lady approached us and started~~

Right when I got through a lady came running out and grabbed my backpack and wouldn't let go so I could run away. She had a cordless [illegible] phone w/ her and called the police. They came and that was the first time I got arrested. It really [illegible] [illegible] impressed on my to think ~~about~~ things through before I do them

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

This story teller has written an adequate paper that many reader may be able to identify with; however, his predictable word choices and less extensive range of rhetorical strategies place the paper in the mid-range achievement level. The last sentence seems predictable and tacked on, a common characteristic of mid-range papers.

This writer seems eager to do what he thinks is the right thing. Perhaps a wider experience with possibilities and options through the reading of other student's work and published autobiographies will extend his ability to use a wider range of strategies. We would hope, for example, that in another draft, this writer would reveal more of the personal impact of the incident on himself and perhaps, how his parents felt at the time of his arrest. A series of quick writes would help him focus on the small moments and their significance.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

I came to America from Japan when I was two. I made many friends, but most of them were Japanese. At that time, English was really foreign to me, as I hardly ever tried to speak that language.

My real terrors in this country came in pre-school. I remember doing a lot of fun, exciting activities, as I did them well, but when it came to pronouncing the alphabets, my tongue wouldn't roll like the rest of the class, that could pronounce the letter "R". Some kids made fun of my pronunciation, which was when I started to hate speaking to others, as I was "silent" in class.

I could recall an incident in preschool when a classmate was going through my lunchbox. There was a Kit-Kat in there that my mother packed. The kid opened my lunch box, took my favorite Kit Kat out, and started eating it. I was going to say something to that thief, but I couldn't. I knew he wouldn't understand what I saying, and the same thing would of happened if I tried to tell

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Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

the teacher. I just stood there and watched in silence, trying to hold back my tears.

I actually started speaking in Kindergarten, and made friends who I talked to a lot, in first grade. In my latter years of elementary school, I spoke a lot, and i knew almost every single kid in my grade. I overcame my fear of speaking, and my pronounciation has improved.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

This mid-range paper relates a fairly interesting incident, but it lacks the coherence and command of a higher range essay. The context, while earnestly told is out of balance with the significance of the incident. The incident itself has the making of a well-told story, but this writer needs perhaps a wider experience with rhetorical strategies such as use of visual details of some objects or characters, and dialogue. He would profit from writing experiences that elicit close observations translated into written sensory language.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

The biggest achievemat in my life so far is getting my license and a car. I got my license on January 17, 1992. I was so nervous. I was sweating and my legs were shaking. But I passed. I got a 93 out of 100. It was putty easy. ~~They~~

Then I got a 85 Ford Bronco II. I love it. It gets good gas mileage and has 4 wheel drive. It climbs hills good. I helped pay for it also. This has been the biggest achievement in my life.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

This writer doesn't as yet completely understand the primary characteristic of the autobiographical essay, a focus on a single incident. He has in fact focused on two incidents, the getting of his driver's licence and his first car. As with many papers in the lower range, the reader can sense the paper that might have been and either incident seems ripe for development into something fuller and richer. The classroom teacher can help this writer to limit his focus and to practice strategies such as orienting the reader to the scene through use of sensory details, dialogue and pacing. Through the strategy of backward mapping, the teacher can help the writer to build his essay toward a preconceived statement of attitude or impact. This writer shows promise. With practice in the strategies of the autobiographical incident, he could write a much more focused paper.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

The childhood memory I remember is when I started ice skating. I was 6 years: old when I saw ice skating for the first time on T.V. after that time, when I saw ice skating on T.V. I wanted to skate. Then my parents took me skating and ever since that day I have been ice skating and competing against other ice skaters. Finally my hard work has paid off and now I am an ice skating coach

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

In this brief essay a series of events is presented as an incident. The reader sense that this writer has a story to tell ("I wanted to skate. Then my parents took me skating. . .") but doesn't as yet understand the rhetorical strategy of focusing on a single incident. (She goes beyond the time boundaries suggested in all autobiographical incident prompts.) She would profit from writing experiences that focus close attention to the smaller moments, perhaps a number of quick writes that elicit a range of sensory writing (e.g., "The bedroom was a mess.") and strategies such as dialogue. Finally, the classroom teacher could help this writer by presenting models of more successful student papers.

Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide
for
Interpretation

In California's writing assessment framework, interpretive writing invites students to say what a text or other data might mean and to justify the meanings they see. It requires thoughtful, patient reading (and rereading) and careful analysis. We classify it as argumentative writing because it occurs in a writing situation where alternative meanings are defensible—where a writer's readers may prefer meanings that are different from the writer's.

Writers of interpretive essays must identify the subject being interpreted but only to the extent that readers may require it; offer meanings by making a claim or claims about the subject; provide evidence from the subject to support or justify the meanings; and maintain a focused, authoritative interpretive stance throughout the essay.

While the *rhetorical* aspect of the assessment focuses on the distinctive features of writing types, the *effectiveness* aspect guides us to look carefully at the more comprehensive features of coherence and style. Coherence, a sense of organization, flow, and focus, is essential to all good writing. The coherent essay has a clear direction, each section flowing naturally from the preceding one. Coherence is demonstrated to readers through emphasis, organization, and repetition achieved through recurrences of language, syntax, and ideas. Style, for the purposes of this assessment, is observable in two written language features: (1) *sentence control*, and (2) *word choice* or *diction*. In assessment of the effectiveness of style, the primary considerations are *appropriateness*, *precision*, and *control*.

The prompts may ask students to decide what a poem might mean, reach conclusions about character relationships in short stories or about data on social phenomena (like TV watching), or make inferences about remembered fictional characters' conflicts or growth in self-knowledge.

With 45 minutes to write one draft, students face a special challenge in announcing early at least some of the claims they intend to make. They also have to orient readers adequately to the essay by presenting the subject and forecasting the purpose and direction of the essay.

In a one-draft test situation, students may have difficulty achieving such a strong start, in large part because they begin writing with only a partial idea of what they want to say.

With or without a strong start, students need to keep readers on track by pointing explicitly to claims they are making about the subject, and they need to lead readers toward a conclusive interpretation. Most important, along the way, students must amass enough specific relevant evidence from the subject (text or data) itself to convince readers that the claims are justified. Instead of retelling or summarizing, they have to present evidence from the subject in a way that supports their claims. Finally, writers have to maintain throughout the essay an authoritative (though not dogmatic or polemical), interpretive stance, assuring readers that they know the subject well and have some interesting (preferably nonobvious) ideas about it.

Score Point 6 – Exceptional Achievement

Point of Departure. The writer orients the reader through a clear and concise identification of the subject being interpreted. The writer provides context to help readers follow the interpretation.

The beginning seems purposeful in that it sets up the interpretation, orienting the reader to what is to come, perhaps even forecasting explicitly the direction the essay will take.

Interpretive Claims. The writer presents interpretive claims that are unusually perceptive. The claims may be unexpected or even contrary to a predictable interpretation.

Evidence. The writer supports interpretive claims with various kinds of evidence: in writing about literature, for example, quotations, paraphrases, and citing/reviewing specific events are appropriate. The writer provides substantial evidence to support major claims. The writer goes well beyond the immediate response most writers would give. Each section of the essay is developed coherently. Language is consistently used with precision and appropriateness. The writer exhibits an exceptional control of a variety of sentence structures and maintains connections between ideas. The overall essay has a consistently smooth forward movement. The writer avoids unsubstantiated generalizations and oversimplifications.

The writer uses "data" from the subject as concrete evidence in an explicit, pointed, convincing interpretation. The writer clearly knows the difference between retelling or summarizing and amassing relevant, concrete evidence to support an interpretive claim.

Interpretive Stance. The writer seems authoritative and committed to justifying claims adequately. The writer knows how to write an interpretive essay and clearly wants to persuade readers that the interpretation is reasonable and valid. The reader never loses sight of the writer's point and can see that the argument advances logically to a convincing and satisfying conclusion. The reader is never left to infer the relevance of evidence, examples, or retelling. The writer does not substitute retelling, summary, or brief and general examples for concrete evidence and insightful reasoning.

The writer may acknowledge that readers favor alternative interpretations. The writer may evaluate alternative interpretations, accepting or rejecting them tactfully.

Score Point 5 – Commendable Achievement

Point of Departure. Like the writer of a six-point essay, this writer provides a context for the subject of the interpretation. The writer presents an appropriate amount of background information about the subject. The opening announces at least one claim about the subject and may forecast the direction the essay will take.

While a six-point essay always begins with a strong opening claim and focus, a five-point essay may work its way into an idea or claim about its subject. Eventually, though, it reaches a clear focus or point.

Interpretive Claims. As in a six-point essay, the writer presents claims clearly. The writer makes perceptive claims.

Evidence. The writer does not rely on summary and includes adequate evidence to support major claims so that the interpretation seems convincing. Evidence may not be as full or insightful as in a six-point essay. A five-point essay may lack the unfaltering smoothness of the six-point essay. A five-point essay will show the writer's ability to use words appropriately. Word choice may show less versatility than in the six-point essay; however, the diction is still consistently strong and controlled throughout the essay. The writer exhibits sustained control of a variety of sentence structures. The writer clearly knows how to construct an interpretation.

Interpretive Stance. Like the writer of a six-point essay, the writer seems authoritative and attempts to convince readers that the interpretation is reasonable. The writer seems thoughtful and clearly understands how to justify an interpretation. The writer may acknowledge alternative interpretations.

Score Point 4 – Adequate Achievement

Point of Departure. The writer of the four-point essay orients readers adequately to the subject but may not always establish an overall structure for the interpretation. The writer identifies the subject and presents enough information about it for the designated readers and may even forecast some part of what is to be discussed. The context usually includes one claim about the subject. The writer of a four-point essay may begin unsteadily but eventually will write his or her way around to a focus, but not so insightfully as a writer of a five-point essay.

Interpretive Claims. The writer of a four-point paper makes at least one clear but sometimes predictable claim.

Evidence. To support the interpretation, the writer offers evidence from the source. The evidence may be general, lacking specific detail. The language in the four-point essay may be somewhat conventional and predictable. The essay shows a sustained control of sentence structure but may have less variety than the five- and six-point essays The writer may rely too much on generalization or summary.

The writer presents an adequate, expected response.

Interpretive Stance. The writer knows how to go about justifying an interpretation.

1. The writer may not reveal the main point until the conclusion but finally does so.

   – or –

2. The writer may set up the interpretation impressively and support it explicitly (as in a five- or six-point essay) but not amass nearly enough relevant evidence to impress readers.

   – or –

3. The writer may provide a "reading" of the subject that offers a series of interesting claims but does not consistently connect them to a main point or major claim.

Score Point 3 – Some Evidence of Achievement

Point of Departure. The writer may begin with a perfunctory introduction in which the subject is simply identified without additional information. The background and context for the essay are quickly sketched.

Interpretive Claims. The claims seem obvious; or if they are thoughtful, they are developed inadequately.

Evidence. The writer may summarize the work or narrate an event rather than offer concrete evidence. Although the reader can understand the major ideas, there may be irrelevant details, digressions, and/or repetitions that hamper the forward movement. The writer shows basic control of simple sentences, but the three-point essay has little sentence variety. The word choice is usually appropriate to the content; however, the writer may rely on general rather than specific language.

Interpretive Stance. The writer of a three-point essay seems to know about some features of supporting an interpretation but cannot yet bring them together in a balanced, convincing way. The writer seems to lack confidence or awareness of readers' needs.

Score Point 2 – Little Evidence of Achievement

Point of Departure. The introduction is either brief or unfocused. The writer may identify the subject but usually fails to identify any claims in the opening.

Interpretive Claims. The writer may introduce no explicit interpretive claims anywhere in the essay. Any claims presented seem obvious. Claims may be too broad or general and may be contradictory. The writer relies on generalizations or summaries. The writer may indicate some understanding beyond the literal level.

Evidence. Little if any relevant evidence is presented.

Interpretive Stance. The writer seems confused and is clearly struggling to present an interpretation. The essay may be incomplete, out of balance, or superficial.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Point of Departure. Context may be missing, abrupt, or confusing.

Interpretive Claims. The writer fails to present interpretive claims. The writer may merely summarize the subject, usually in a few lines. The writer stays on a literal level.

Evidence. The writer presents neither specific support not personal reactions. The reader is frequently confused about relationships between sentences and ideas. There are frequent lapses in sentence sense, resulting in confusion. The writer is on topic but does not refer to a text or to data presented in the prompt.

Interpretive Stance. The writer responds to the prompt but does not seem to understand what is required in interpretive writing situations.

Score Point 0 – Inappropriate Response

Off topic or unscorable.

Sample Student Papers
Interpretation

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

When children are young, they experience events only inside their own little world. They don't know of the world outside their own. Their world is filled with security and trust, where the people in their life (parents) are their idols. These idols can do no wrong and are knowledgable about everything. But at this young, tender age, their security is fragile and on the brik of destrucation. This security is broken when they realize that there is a world outside their own. Added to which, their idolization of the people in their lives is also broken. This experience is best described in the story Father and I.

This story accurately protrays the

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

emotions of a child losing his haven. ~~[illegible]~~ The confusion of this child ~~about the real world~~ as he comes to know the real world. But in order to describe the utter destruction of his world, it must be told of his world before his realization.

As father and son first start their walk, the son's faith and unbreakable trust is praunfoundly present. To him, his father was the boss and indeed a special person. "... where people were not allowed to go as a rule, but Father worked on the railway and so he had a right to." (pg. 1) This backs up the sons faith in his father. He feels previgiled because he was allowed to go where it was forbidden, because his father worked there. This gives the son a sense of pride and importance.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

The child in this story believes his father to be knowlatgable about everything, to know everyone and everyplace. "Father scanned them with an expert eye and I could see he was satisfied." (pg. 2) The one word "expert" shows how unbreakable his trust in his father is. His image of his father is supported when his father~~s~~ says hello to the workers, when he teaches him of nature, and when he knows what to do and when to do it.

This faith is broken when a train passes which the father didnt know was coming. And when his father didn't reconzie the conducter. This destroys the child's unshakable trust in his father.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

The child is at utter loss when he discovers his father doesn't know everything. Because of this he also starts to feel insecure about the fact that his father will protect him. "... it was the anguish that was to come, the unknown... ... wouldn't be able to protect me against" (pg.5)

The child has realised his father isn't godlike and cannot protect him from everything. When this happens to a child, their confusion goes even beyond their once belief in their idols. This might help children mature, but they lose with them an innocence that can never be found again.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

In this high scoring essay the writer orients the reader by setting the story within the context of the universal experience of child's loss of innocence.

The writer perceptively, but predictably; claims that the story portrays the emotions of a child losing his haven of security because of a chance encounter with a train while on a walk with his father. The writer uses several types of evidence such as appropriate quotations and citation of specific key events. Instead of simply retelling or summarizing, the writer uses the evidence to support interpretive claims.

The reader never loses sight of the writer's point as the argument advances to its logical conclusion about the loss of an innocence that can never be found again. Given the time constraints of the testing situation, the essay is an admirable and commendable example of interpretation.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

The relationship between a boy and his father has always been a useful theme in stories and movies. The short story, Father and I, by Par Lagerkvist is no exception. It is an account of a boy's mentality towards his father ~~and~~ during a Sunday journey to the woods. Eventually, after a series of significant events, the young boy discovers something about life, ~~and~~, himself and his father.

The story's beginning shows an affectionate [illegible] bond between father and son. [illegible] One passage states, "... we were sound, sensible people, Father and I, brought up with nature and used to it." (P 1) This clearly manifests the common qualities between the two, and ~~others~~ it also predicts a peaceful and [illegible] pleasant journey in

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

the woods. The boy evidently shares the likes of his father. For example he mentioned, "... we were both gay and cheerful by nature, Father and I. (P. 3) This might imply a desire in the boy to be like his father, who is apparently his role model. Therefore, the relationship in the beginning of their walk is loving, and the boy's attitude towards Father is total reverence and honor.

When the journey comes to an end, and it's time to head back home, the boy begins noticing changes in the atmosphere of the forest. Imaginations, shapes and figures begin to form. The boy describes, "The trees were so funny. They stood listening to every step we took, as if they didn't know who we were... Now it was quite dark." (P. 3) Soon a slight bit of fear enters the boy's heart. "I looked all around me in fear. Nothing but darkness everywhere. I hardly dared take a deep breath... it was all horrible." (P. 4) His apprehensive-

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

ness and anxiety for going home causes him to think deeper about himself.

The boy notices his father's calmness and contentment. Yet, he also realizes that he doesn't possess those same feeling. He states, "I couldn't understand how he could be so calm when it was so murky. Nothing was right, nothing real, it was all so weird." (P.4) This is where his attitude for Father undergoes a change. He sees the great gap between Father's mind and his own. He said, "I felt lonely and forsaken. It was so strange that only I was afraid, not Father, that we didn't think the same." (P4) The boy is confused and vexed by his father's peculiar reactions to the darkness. Suddenly, the great link between the two is broken, and the boy ~~has entered~~ enters a new stage in life.

The boy discovers something that he dreads — growing up. He's always had

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

Father's protection and security whenever Father was present. But the journey had moments where Father seemed to have abandoned him. The boy wants to hold on to Father, yet he knows he'll eventually he need to let go. "It was for me, for my sake. I sensed what it meant; it was the anguish that was to come, the unknown, all that Father knew nothing about, that he wouldn't be able to protect me against. ... It wasn't a real world, a real life." (P. 5) The boy's future is seemingly described here. He is afraid of becoming independent, but A that is what Father is teaching him. The security is gone, the dependence on Father is gone, and the boy must go and live reality—life. Therefore, the boy isn't like Father anymore.

This story reveals the thoughts of a child who is growing up and seeing the realites of life. He enters, for once, a world of his own, all alone. And ultimately, he discovers that life must be faced without a Father, but with a heart & mind of his own.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

In this exceptional essay the writer orients the reader by identifying the piece to be interpreted and providing the context of the developing father-son relationship.

The writer perceptively claims that the boy "discovers something about life, himself and his father." Then the writer clearly supports the claim through relevant quotes from the text which evidence the boy's understanding. The writer continues to support his interpretation persuasively by using a variety of evidence—quotations, paraphrases, and a review critical events—leading the reader to a convincing and satisfying conclusion.

The essay's strength comes from the consistent interpretative stance and supporting evidence. It is an exceptional achievement for a first draft written in one period.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

The silence for the author of this story is a shameful silence. When she first went to an English school, she was unable to speak. I think that she was afraid to talk for fear that the other children would outcast her for not speaking properly. Her [illegible]ability to speak became most difficult when she was put on the spot. I also have the problem of when I'm put in front of a group of people, I will just freeze and not be able to talk at all. For three years though, Mrs. Kingston took refuge in her silence, it was almost her protector. I think she thought that if she just stayed silent that everybody would leave her alone and every thing would be fine. It was only when she found that she needed to talk and that she couldnt, that the silence

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

turned into a misery and dread. To quote the author, "It spoils my day with self-disgust when I hear my broken voice come skittering out into the open. This was said when she was a grown adult. She has a definite lack of self-confidence. I'm not from another country or even moved or changed schools, but I am wondering that if she had made friends in her English school if her speaking problem would've been so bad? If that is true, I think that we should all try to ~~be~~ make friends with everybody and encourage others to do the same. We should also give support and encouragement to bring them out of their shells. Actually, ~~if~~ even if its not true, we should all be doing this anyways. I think that if everyone made this effort, there would be less fights and problems. We could all be doing our part to make this world a better place

Commentary for Mid-range Achievement Essay

In this middle range paper, the writer adequately orients the reader to the subject by referring to Ms. Kingston's English school. She begins with the interpretive claim that "the silence for the author of this story is a shameful silence." She goes on to adequately support this claim with personal anecdotes, direct quotation from the text, reflection, and speculation about possible causes of her silence. Although her focus wanders, the writer seems authoritative and shows confidence in her interpretation.

Through peer response groups, this writer could strengthen her interpretive claim and organize her support to more effectively convince her readers that her interpretation is perceptive rather than predictable.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

In the play, Julius Caesar, by William Shakespeare, Brutus is one of the protagonists who gains knowledge. He unfortunedly gains this knowledge too late because his mistakes lead to his death

In the beginning he is in deep thought about whether to join Cassius and kill Caesar or not. He kills his friend and chaos breaks out. In the end he commits suicide because he is to ashamed to be captured.

Through each event he gains knowledge of his actions and thoughts. He knows that even the best man makes mistakes. His mistake was to give in to Cassius plot. He learned, most importantly, that loyalty to friends is of greater value than power and loyalty to a

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

country and it's cause.

Brutus argues with Cassius because he is aware he has done wrong. This portrays his repent and knowlidge about his mistakes. It is in his speeches that reader is aware that Brutus is sorry for not have acted right. He killed his friend without a real reason. He says, "I have no cause to spurn him. But the general." The general was the ambition that he and Cassius thought Caesar would use to gain complete power.

When he sees Caesar's ghost he sees his conscience. He is defeated and knows he should have never acted against his friend.

Commentary for Mid-range Achievement Essay

This writer begins by making her claim about the subject—"Brutus is one of the protagonists who gains knowledge"—and adding the predictable claim that he gains this knowledge "too late because his mistakes lead to his death." She loosely organizes the support for her claim as a series of mistakes Brutus makes but does so superficially without the convincing support and argument of a higher range paper. She does include one quotation from the text but needs to consider additional support to convince her reader that her interpretation is plausible or perceptive.

Through peer writing groups, this writer could benefit from activities which stress a variety of textual support, such as direct quotation with explanation, paraphrasing relevant sections, and reviewing appropriate events which are key to the writer's interpretive claim.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

Tyler Mowat is a character who has gained alot of self knowledge. He gained his self knowledge on wolves after studing, and watching them for several months. Mowat went from knowing very little, to knowing very much about the wolf. Mowat learned that the wolves would feed off of mice if nothing else to eat, he also learned that the wolf is very territorial, and extremely pertective of it's young. Mowat learned the behavior of the wolf by watching them every day.

The knowledge also affected Mowat in ways. He become kind of close to the wolfs he watched every day. This realy affected him when he found out that Mike had killed one of the wolves he had been watching, and that the wolf that he killed had just had babies.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

In this low-range paper, the writer gives little context for his claim that "Tyler [sic Farley] Mowat is a character who has gained a lot of self knowledge." He seems to confuse the author's knowledge about himself with his accumulation of knowledge about wolves and so merely tells the reader some of the detail Mowat has learned as support for his claim. The writer does, however, attempt to interpret Mowat's experiences with the wolves by stating that "the knowledge also affected Mowat in way's." There is little evidence given to support the writer's interpretive claim as the writer loses focus throughout this brief essay.

This writer would benefit greatly from working in a writer's workshop environment with peer collaboration and discussion to understand interpretive writing.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

In the story Father and I. The young boy thinks very highly of his father and loves his father very much the young boy looks up to his father. To the young boy his father is very smart, he knows about the trains when they come. and about the forest. But there's one thing that disturbs the young boy his father never seems afraid, always calm. Towards the end when they were walking home, when the Black train came out of know where. unexpected the young boy knew that his dad won't always be able to protect and love him.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

Rarely moving beyond a limited summary of the story, this writer identifies the subject but does not state a clear interpretive stance. Rather, she gives generalizations—"the young boy thinks very highly of his father . . ." and "the young boy looks up to his father." Citing no evidence or support for her general statements, this writer indicates some understanding beyond the literal level but neither deals with nor supports a substantial interpretive claim.

With the support of peer groups, this writer could be taught how to develop an interpretive claim and how to convincingly support that claim. This writer would benefit from practice using direct quotations, paraphrasing and citing or reviewing specific appropriate events to convince readers to accept her interpretive claim.

Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide for Reflective Essay

Reflective essays derive from the personal experience of the writer. But beyond the description and narration involved in communicating that experience, reflection requires probing into what this experience can show about the writer's life in particular and, more importantly, about the writer's ideas of life in general.

The writer of a reflective essay works to see connections between experience and ideas, to test out thinking about an idea in the light of other experiences, and to arrive at new dimensions of the initial thinking.

Reflective essays are grounded in the concrete. An ordinary thing seen, read, or experienced triggers the reflection and leads to exploration of an idea. Occasions for reflections cover the range of personal experience from observations of natural phenomena, to recalling or witnessing events or to encountering a provocative idea in a novel or on the screen.

While the *rhetorical* aspect of the assessment focuses on the distinctive features of writing types, the *effectiveness* aspect guides us to look carefully at the more comprehensive features of coherence and style. Coherence, a sense of organization, flow, and focus, is essential to all good writing. The coherent essay has a clear direction, each section flowing naturally from the preceding one. Coherence is demonstrated to readers through emphasis, organization, and repetition achieved through recurrences of language, syntax, and ideas. Style, for the purposes of this assessment, is observable in two written language features: (1) *sentence control*; and (2) *word choice* or *diction*. In assessing the effectiveness of style, the primary considerations are *appropriateness*, *precision*, and *control*.

Unlike observational writing, which focuses on conveying one's personal perceptions, or autobiographical incident, which involves narrating an incident and evaluating its significance, reflective essays move to a different level of abstraction. The writer of a reflective essay ultimately reveals that the subject of the essay is, in fact, an abstraction, such as truth, beauty, patience, injustice. Reflective writers explore the meaning of this abstraction for themselves and for people in general. It is this people-in-general aspect of reflection—exploring the larger social implications of an idea—that is the hallmark of the reflective essay. It involves students in a unique kind of experience-based thinking.

The flow of thinking in exploring an idea may take shapes such as the following:

- The writer may first present the occasion (narrate a full incident or describe an observation), choosing details and images carefully as a way to ground the reflection that follows. The reflection then moves off on its own, perhaps with some reference to the initiating occasion.
- The writer may launch an occasion but then move in and out of it along the way, reflecting on the idea it suggests.
- The writer may construct a web of related, often parallel experiences that serve as the stimulus for reflection.
- The writer may focus first on a single occasion and then draw associations between it and other related experiences that build to an ultimate idea about people or the world at large.
- The writer may begin with an idea from a quotation, proverb, or general experience and test concrete personal experience against it, reflecting about how each experience relates to the

idea. The reflection is refined more fully with each example until the idea has been tested from various angles.

Whatever thought pattern emerges, the writer's reflections explore the meaning of the occasion beyond the personal to the general.

Students who lack experience reading and writing the reflective essay usually respond in limited ways to prompts: (1) they fail to ground their reflections in concrete observations or personal anecdotes or do so only superficially and then write a conventional "expository" essay about the idea in the topic; (2) they narrate a relevant personal experience but then neglect to explore the idea it suggests or do so only briefly, often in a moralizing way; or (3) they write a meditation rather than a reflection, turning an idea over and over but not grounding their ideas in personal experience.

Score Point 6 – Exceptional Achievement

Occasion for Reflection. The writer of a six-point essay memorably presents the occasion for reflection (a thing seen, read, or experienced), often with the fine detail of the naturalist or autobiographer. Though it does not dominate the essay at the expense of reflection, the occasion is nevertheless presented in extended, concrete detail. Whether it be an anecdote or an observation of nature or a literary text, the occasion grounds the entire essay in concrete experience.

Writers of six-point essays may use such strategies as the following to ground their reflections:

- Describe an animal, object, or phenomenon, using concrete language rich in sensory detail.
- Record specific behaviors, properties, or actions, often using narrative strategies such as pacing, dialogue, or movement.
- Cite a quotation—poetry, prose, or proverb.
- Construct a web of related, often parallel experiences that serve as the stimulus for reflection.

Reflection. In a six-point essay the reflection or the idea suggested by the occasion is exceptionally thoughtful and convincing. The reader is impressed by particular insights. The writer is clearly thinking freshly, originally, and honestly about the idea and has left commonplaces and cliches behind. The reflection tends to be extended, reflecting a serious, almost tenacious, probing and exploring of the idea.

The reflection may include generalizations about the writer's personal experience (signaled by "I" and "my") or more abstract commentary (signaled by "people," "they," and the editorial "we") about the idea and its broader implications. (For brevity's sake, these two types of reflections can be referred to as *personal reflection* and *general reflection.*)

Personal reflection may be understood as the first step away from narration of personal experience toward the reflective essay's characteristic idea abstraction of general reflection. Most essays scored six will have some explicit, insightful general reflection. In some notable papers, however, the writer's presentation of the occasion is at the same time a reflection. In these papers the general reflection is implicit, embedded in phrases or clauses that cue the reader to move beyond the specific occasion to the abstraction that underlies it. The tone, established by a distancing of self from occasion, clearly conveys the reflective nature of such essays. Though exploratory, the reflection seems to find a direction and reveals discovery or deepening insight, sometimes expressed as wonder, without a sense of conclusiveness.

The six-point essay shows the writer's exceptional control of a range of sentence structures. These writers consistently use language with precision, appropriateness, and imagination, drawing on specific concrete language, sensory description, and details to draw the reader into the exploration.

Score Point 5 – Commendable Achievement

Occasion for Reflection. Like a six-point essay, the five-point essay presents an extended concrete occasion. The occasion does not dominate the essay at the expense of reflection. A five-point essay lacks only the vividness and impact of a six-point essay.

Reflection. The writer engages in extended, thoughtful reflection. As in a six-point essay, the writer includes at least some general reflection. The occasional five-point essay establishes a reflective tone by an effective distancing of self from the occasion. The five-point essay, however, will not carry it through so conclusively. The personal reflection and general reflection are serious and honest but lack the intellectual leaps and freshness of a six-point essay. The essay reaches beyond obvious statements about the occasion and idea. The reflection is not entirely predictable.

A five-point essay shows the writer's ability to use words appropriately. Word choice may show less versatility and imagination than in the six-point essay; however, the diction is still consistently strong and controlled. The writer exhibits sustained control of a variety of sentence structures, and the essay reveals direction or purpose, although without the insight of the six-point essay.

Score Point 4 – Adequate Achievement

Occasion for Reflection. The four-point essay presents a concrete occasion but may lack the detail or specificity of a five- or six-point essay. The language, though appropriate, may be somewhat conventional and predictable. A full-fledged incident may dominate the reflection. It strikes the reader as a strong and interesting occasion.

Reflection. Reflection will indicate a serious attempt to explore the idea suggested by the occasion but may be less well grounded in that specific occasion. Some details may seem extraneous, interrupting the forward exploratory movement of the essay. The essay shows a sustained control of sentence structure, but it may have less variety than the five- or six-point essays. The reflection may be intelligent but predictable or commonplace. The connection may seem tangential. The writer may rely on personal reflections about the occasion but will still include at least a brief general reflection. A four-point essay may be characterized by thoughtfulness rather than by discovery.

Score Point 3 – Some Evidence of Achievement

Occasion. The writer presents an occasion, but it may either be brief or dominate the essay. What appear at first reading to be occasions may actually be examples chosen to illustrate an initial generalization. The writer may rely on general rather than specific language.

Reflection. The essay may have a meandering, rather than purposefully exploratory, quality. Although the reader can understand the major ideas, there may be irrelevant details, digressions, and/or repetitions. The three-point essay may rely on personal reflection to the the exclusion of general reflection. Reflection will seem obvious or even superficial, often taking the form of moralizing.

Some three-point essays will offer only extended reflection about the idea in the prompt, with little grounding in an occasion. The essay may seem generally competent and the reflection may be as interesting as in a four- or five-point essay, but the writer has not yet learned that reflection must be carefully grounded in an occasion.

Other three-point essays will begin with what sounds like the end point of reflection, a conclusion or generalization that becomes the stimulus for recounting one or more illustrative examples.

Score Point 2 – Little Evidence of Achievement

Occasion. The occasion may be brief or it may dominate the essay. There may be no occasion or the essay may be all occasion, with little reflection.

Reflection. If there is an occasion, the reflection may be additive or unfocused. It may be very brief and simplistic, and some details are irrelevant. The overall structure of the essay is weak. Some two-point essays may be extended personal or generalized reflections on a topic with no grounding at all in an occasion. The writer exhibits little control of sentence structure, and the word choice is limited. Some words may be inappropriate or inappropriately used.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Occasion. If there is an occasion, it will be very brief and devoid of specificity or concreteness.

Reflection. No reflection is indicated. There may be brief and superficial attempts at definition or statements of opinion rather than reflection. The paper lacks organization, and there are frequent lapses in sentence sense, resulting in confusion for the reader.

Score Point 0 – Inappropriate Response

Off topic or unscorable.

Sample Student Papers
Reflective

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

Celebrities and heros. Heros and celebrities. Who are the celebrities and who are the heros? Is a celebrity a hero, or is a hero a celebrity? What are the differences? In a day and age where people want to famous and rich, the hero of the past is left behind. What happened to old courageous, adventurer who risked his life to save others? What happened to the heroism of men that strived for a better life. People, now, only want to be famous, without realizing that they must sacrifice a part of themselves. People want to be a celebrity, but to not want to sacrifice and be a hero.

Bill Moyers said, "We seem to worship celebrities today, not heroes." I think that this statement accurately describes the situation of people's materialistic values and the decreasing emphasis on doing good. This is a turn for the worst, because he need

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

heros that will sacrifice themselves for the good of the people and not just celebrities who only want fame and riches. We need people who will give to the system and not take away from it.

What is alarming to me is that sometimes I worship the celebrities instead of honoring the heros that have made my life better. I watch in awe as Michael Jordan does his amazing slams, while failing to say thank you to my parents who sacrficed their time and money to support me. I watch people, stare indefinately into the TV screen watching for their favorite movie stars at the Academy Awards, while their parents are busy working the night shift at some store trying to earn enough money for their children's college. Bill Moyers' statement has made me think about my true heros. I realize that Jodie Foster does not affect my life as does my parents. Michael Keaton does not sacrifice his time, money, energy and life for me. In my eyes, my parents are the true heros. They are self-sacrificing

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

caring, devoted people. Moyers' statement has changed the way I view the heros in my life.

More people need to honor their "true" heros more than celebrities. True heros are the ones who may sacrifice their lives for you and for others. We need to emphasice on the caring, and devotion that heros portray, more than all the glitter and glamour of the celebrities. We should examine our morals closer and see if they need to be changed. If everyone were to base our morals on the courageous, self-sacrificing hero, we would reach a kind of utopia. There would be an end to the rising problem of moraless children, as see in the violence of the Los Angeles riots.

In conclusion, we should start examining who are the "true" heros of our lives. We should then focus on them more than the materialistic aspects of being a celebrity. We should honor the heros and try to be more like them. For me, I would try to honor my parents more and

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

become more like them. By changing our values, the world would be a better place. Bill Moyers' statement leaves a lot to think about. It gives us a goal to reverse his opinion about society.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

In this high achievement essay the writer begins by engaging in a general reflective discussion of what happened to the "old courageous adventurer . . ." The writer thoughtfully grounds this reflective questioning in the specific occasion of the quotation provided in the prompt. He goes on to test this quotation against his personal reflection, exploring the differences between celebrities and heroes in his own life. He draws on concrete personal examples of both celebrities (i.e., Michael Jackson) and heroes (i.e., his parents) as he strives to discover the differences between them. The writer stays grounded in the occasion (the quotation) as he weaves together his personal reflection (focusing on his parents as heroes) and his general reflection (exploring the impact of heroes and celebrities in our lives.) The reflection is probing and insightful. The writer continually questions his own reflections and strives to reformulate them either more comprehensively, more flexibly or more realistically. As he probes the issue of heroes and celebrities raised by the occasion the reflection stays firmly grounded and we are consistently aware of the writers ongoing exploration.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

"I ended up with a broken fiddle –
And a broken laugh, and a thousand memories,
And not a single regret."

This is a quote all people should take into count when they are old of age. Too many people now are not living their lives to the fullest but most people around us are way to busy to just stop and smell the roses. Their lives have no time for the small things in life.

Is your fiddle broken because you didn't have the energy to pluck the strings? Is your laugh broken because you used it to much or do you not laugh anymore and have forgotten how to? Are your memories all the same thing? Every day you see the same people. The same things. Have you ever just by chance do something wild like take off with your friends on some unknown trip where the future is not carved in stone but silly putty waiting to be formed. Do you not have a single regret of

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

your life?

My friends and foes I would like to say my life so far has been lived to the fullest. I have hiked in many places. toured a thousand lands and not even left beautiful California. Just wait till I have my car and My friends and I whiz out of this state to see others. To meet new people. To see new cultures. To live with no hand squeezing you with no way out

My life these days are full of excitement. Wheather I'm riding my bike on someone elses land or Hike in an oak forest with the sun hitting me with sprinkles. I live my life by my rules (except when it interfers with my parents rules) I go where I want to go.

When I was a freshman I decided to be in our Highschool Band. With that I have traveled far places in a Bus. I have met new friends and have been to cities which do not even soem as small as Sunol. Even though there are rules for us, My friends

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

And I seem to be able to live around them. We KNOW what our boundries are and we try not to cross them but we live ON. We live our lives without bordom.

Can you say that about your life? Has your life been lived to the fullest? I hope So because I do not want to become a person who lives in his own world of work, work, work. I want to be the fiddler and "end up with a broken fiddle – and a broken laugh, and a thousand memories and not have a single regret.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

In this high achievement essay the writer begins by grounding the reader in the specific occasion of the quotation provided in the prompt. The writer briefly gives his own interpretation of the quotation and moves immediately into general reflection providing an exceptionally engaging series of rhetorical questions (Is your fiddle broken because your don't have the energy to pluck the strings?). Then the writer moves into personal reflection, exploring the quality of his own life ("my life has been lived to the fullest," and "my days are full") and providing personal experiences to support and develop the reflection. The writer moves easily back and forth between personal and general reflection maintaining a clear connection between the occasion, his own experiences, and his reflections. The writer consistently uses language with precision and imagination, drawing on specific concrete imagery and details to draw the reader into the exploration.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

I feel that Moyers' statement about people of today worshiping celebrities instead of heroes is correct. In the world we live in, we seem to oney be taught that the most famous people are the ones that we should look up to and follow in their footsteps. What everybody forgets to tell us is that we can try and look up to anybody.

One of my heroes is named Robert. I met him on the street. He had no home, torn and tattered clothing, but he had the warmest heart and the biggest smile. He wasn't upset that he was homeless, he just tried living his life like he

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(continued)*

wanted to. Although Robert did look up to a lot of rich celebrities, he had his own life and he worked hard to keep himself happy.

A lot of my friends look up to singers, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordon and other people like that. One day I asked them why their heroes seemed to be celebrities. Every single person responded with the answer, "Who else an I supposed to look up to?" This made me aware of the fact that a lot of people are reered to believe that only celebrities can be heroes.

What ever happened to mom being a hero, or the man that risked his life to save the drawning child? These

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

people seem to have died with time. No longer is it what the person can do for somebody, it is what somebody can get from the person. Be it money, power, or fame, as long as they recieve something.

In conclusion I would just like to say that people do worship celebrities instead of heroes, but only because people can't define the word hero because it can be different for every person. A hero may have one characteristic for one person, but six different ones for another. So, a hero can be unique for every person.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

The writer of this essay opens with a clear statement affirming the position stated in Bill Moyer's essay about heroes and celebrities ("I feel that Moyer's statement . . . is correct."). The writer then proceeds to support the generalization in four paragraphs presenting a specific personal occasion, describing her personal hero Robert and moving into a more general exploration of the qualities of a hero ("whatever happened to mom being a hero . . ."). This writer has clearly learned a formula for writing essays. Although she touches on some general reflection in paragraph four, and adds some personal reflection in her concluding paragraph, the essay has a formulaic perfunctory quality that keeps it from the higher range.

The writer needs to abandon this formulaic structure. This will free her to engage in exploratory nature of the reflective writing task.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

Courage, saving a life, taking a hard test, standing up for what you believe, these are all examples of being courageous. In Yevtushenko's story, his main character displays outward courage by fighting Red, the neighborhood bully. On the other side of the spectrum, Anne Sexton's poem vividly discribe's an inward courage. Courage is displayed in every day life as well as in extrodinary events.

During times of ultimate sacrifice, much courage is displayed. In a story that I read once, great amounts of courage were displayed in an extrodina situation. Two sisters were mountain cimbing. One had slipped, while the sister on the top was tring to

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

pull her sibling up to safety, she slipped even further If more attempts were made, the sister on the top of the mountain would also fall and they would go crashing to their death. At this thought, the loving sister who had fallen, cut the rope and fell, leaving her sister safely at the head of the huge mountain. Great courage was displayed here. In situations such as these great strength is needed to control yourself and help others.

Inward struggles arise in our every day lives. Finding courage to indure untill the end when you want to give up, standing up for what you believe, and admitting your mistakes all take great courage. these examples take inward courage, courage that comes from deep inside. Anne Sexton writes about inward courage in her poem.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

The writer of this essay opens with a general definition of courage, grounding her statement in the ideas presented in the Yevtushenko selection and the Sexton poem provided by the prompt. The writer then moves away from these selections to explore her own ideas of courage, presenting a memorable story of courage that she read (paragraph two) and extending from this occasion to reflect on the kinds of "struggles [that] arise in our everyday life." In discussing the "inward courage" required to face such struggles the writer goes back to the Sexton poem, aptly weaving together examples from the poem with those in her own experience; and reflecting personally in ways that each of us can discover a secret to being courageous. This essay clearly has all of the components of the reflective essay. However, the reflection lacks the insight and exploratory quality of that found in high range papers.

As this student has more direction, as she reads and writes more reflective essays, the depth of her insights and the breadth of her reflections will grow.

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Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

"But life without meaning is the torture of restleness and vague desire". Without meaning, life is ~~a~~ torture. I feel that everyone should have meaning in life because without meaning what is the purpose of life? Sometimes I find myself wondering why ~~[illegible]~~ we were ~~the~~ man kind put on this earth. I think everyone should be determained and successful in everything they do.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

This embryonic reflective essay conveys a sense of a writer struggling to find the words to express feelings. The occasion for reflection is the line, "but life without meaning is the torture . . ." This line is the writer's impetus for reflection; however, the reflection is unfocused and somewhat confusing.

With increased opportunities to read and write reflective essays, this student will learn to focus and develop her reflections. This writer seems to write reflectively and will learn to go beyond simply saying, "I feel that everyone should have meaning in life because without meaning, what is the purpose of life."

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

I chose the quotation from Fiddler Jones. I like his outlook on it because he's saying that he lived life to it's fullest, and [illegible] he died without a single regret.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

This essay merely identifies and restates the quotation. There is no reference to a personal incident or personal values or attitudes.

A brief opinion, "I like. . .," rather than a specific occasion for reflection was offered. There is no personal or general reflection at all

This student needs to provide personal or general reflection in order to explore ideas rather than merely providing statements of opinions. Experiences and ideas should be explored reflectively. By providing personal connections to the choice of quotations, the writer will begin to develop her reflections by filling in appropriate details.

Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide for Speculation about Causes and Effects

Prompts for speculation require writers to present one of two kinds of speculative argument:

1. Writers speculate or conjecture about the *causes* of a given situation, event, or trend.

– or –

2. Writers speculate or predict possible *effects* (outcomes or consequences) of a given event or phenomenon.

These requirements make speculation essentially persuasive, requiring systematically developed arguments carefully grounded in a precisely defined situation. Students use "what if" patterns of thinking to propose causes or to predict consequences, and then they attempt to convince readers to take seriously their proposed causes and effects.

They elaborate on these causes and effects, developing and linking them to convince the reader of the plausibility of the argument.

While the *rhetorical* aspect of the assessment focuses on the distinctive features of writing types, the *effectiveness* aspect guides us to look carefully at the more comprehensive features of coherence and style. Coherence, a sense of organization, flow, and focus, is essential to all good writing. The coherent essay has a clear direction, each section flowing naturally from the preceding one. Coherence is demonstrated to readers through emphasis, organization, and repetition achieved through recurrences of language, syntax, and ideas. Style, for the purposes of this assessment, is observable in two written language features: (1) *sentence control;* and (2) *word choice* or *diction*. In assessment of the effectiveness of style, the primary considerations are *appropriateness*, *precision*, and *control*.

Speculation is a complex type of writing, potentially involving imaginative, inventive argument developed by such strategies as definition, description, narration, and explanation. The essay may present a factual assessment arising from knowledge of the real world; or it may present a fanciful guess about a fantastic situation. In either case, the writer's success depends on inventing plausible causes and effects and arguing them both imaginatively and logically. The best essays will exhibit and develop internal logic and consistency that are directly suited to the situation, whether "real world" or fantasy.

Score Point 6 – Exceptional Achievement

A six-point essay engages the reader immediately. It seems purposeful. The writer seems aware of readers' questions and needs throughout the essay. The essay seems to be not just written but written to particular readers. The writer convinces the readers of the plausibility of the speculation.

A six-point essay demonstrates qualities all readers admire: conviction, enthusiasm, freshness. These essays may use an unconventional rhetorical approach. A six-point essay may take chances and succeed.

5

Presenting the Situation. The six-point essay writer clearly defines, identifies, or describes the situation to be speculated about. Though it does not dominate the essay at the expense of speculation, the situation is nevertheless presented fully and precisely. The writer limits the occasion appropriately, focusing reader attention on just those aspects of the situation that the writer will speculate about. Although this information usually comes at the beginning of the essay, some writers may devise other ways of revealing the situation. Whether it arises from fact or from fantasy, the presentation of the situation grounds and focuses the entire essay.

Writers of six-point essays may describe or detail the situation that is established in the prompt, or they might create the situation by using narrative or anecdotal techniques. In either case, they will use concrete language, rich in sensory detail.

The writer of the six-point essay acknowledges readers' concerns. For real-world situations, the writer of the six-point essay acknowledges the reader's experience or familiarity with a situation and, using narrative or descriptive strategies, builds on this awareness to focus reader attention on a comparable situation. For fantasy situations, the writer acknowledges reader concerns and questions about the occasion and uses narrative or descriptive techniques to create a believable, if fanciful, situation.

Whether the essay arises from a factual assessment of a real situation or from a fanciful guess about a fanciful situation, the writer consistently demonstrates broad knowledge and clear understanding of the situation. In this way the writer establishes authority.

Logic and Relevance of Causes and Effects. In the six-point essay, the proposed causes and effects are clearly related to the particular situation that the writer has defined. Writers use imaginative, inventive argument to convince the reader of the logic of their speculations. The best writers are clearly considering possibilities and are seeing multiple perspectives. They are stretching their imaginations to follow their ideas as far as they can; and they are maintaining focus by establishing and continually developing the close relationship between the particular situation and the effects that might arise from it.

Because speculation is essentially a persuasive type of writing, the best writers will be continually aware of readers' needs. They might refer to the readers directly, trying to enlist their support; or they might directly acknowledge the readers' possible questions or objections to postulated speculations. Throughout the essay, the writers of the six-point essays seem to understand fully that particular readers must be convinced that their speculations are plausible and are appropriate to the situation they have defined.

In proposing appropriate causes and effects, writers may employ some of the following strategies:

- Use "what if" patterns of thinking to pose causes and effects and to show the relationship between these conjectures and the situation.
- Build a succession of causes and effects, each changing the complexion of the whole.
- Show a direct and logical connection between the speculated cause or effect and the situation: how the causes logically create the situation or how the effects arise as a natural consequence of it.
- Control organizational sequences, such as the following: movement from least to most important cause or effect; from small to large issues; from concrete to abstract; from personal to societal causes and effects.

The writer of the six-point essay establishes, maintains, and develops a plausible relationship between the situation and each of the proposed causes and effects. The speculation is linked naturally to the situation. Transitions are of particular importance in these essays, keeping the reader grounded both in the relationship between the situation and the proposed causes and effects and in the logical development and progression of the speculation itself. Through these transitions the writer carries the reader along with the methodical development of the argument. Throughout the essay, the six-point essay writer weaves together facts, opinions, and projections to create and develop convincing reasons for the proposed speculations.

An occasional writer may present only a narrative (a story scenario) that is so fully developed and effective that readers are convinced of the logic and relevance of the argument through the narrative's implications.

Elaboration of Argument. The six-point essay provides substantial elaboration, convincing the reader that the writer's conjectures are valid for the situation. These writers elaborate their speculated causes and effects with carefully chosen evidence that is logically and fully developed. Such evidence is chosen because it is relevant and convincing. It is developed fully with precise, explicit detail to convince the reader of both the logic and the authenticity of the proposed cause or effect.

Some strategies writers may use to develop their arguments are the following:

- Cite facts, opinions, projections, and personal experiences or observations (anecdotes) to explain or validate a cause or an effect.
- Elaborate on possibilities arising from proposed causes and effects, showing possible "domino effects" that might determine the direction of a developing situation.
- Give specific examples of comparable causes and effects that have arisen in analogous situations.

Writers may mention several possible causes and effects, developing and linking them; or they may mention only one, building it fully and examining it closely from a variety of perspectives. In any event, the six-point essay writer must make a full and convincing argument for at least one postulated cause or effect.

Score Point 5 – Commendable Achievement

Presenting the Situation. As in the six-point essay, the situation is clearly defined but with less elaboration. The situation does not dominate the essay at the expense of speculation. The writer of the five-point essay relies on a narrower range of strategies for presenting the situation. The five-point essay writer will limit and focus the occasion, though possibly with less panache than the six-point writer. The language will lack only the vividness and impact of the six-point essay. In the five-point essay as in the six-point essay, the writer's knowledge and understanding of the situation is clear throughout, and a sense of confidence and authority is maintained.

Logic and Relevance of Causes and Effects. As in the six-point essay, the writer proposes causes and effects that are linked naturally to the defined situation. The writer conjectures persuasively for possible, probable, or plausible causes and effects. The speculations are serious and logical, lacking only the freshness and imagination that is characteristic of the six-point essay. The writer reaches beyond obvious statements about possible causes and effects to speculations that are not entirely predictable.

The writer of the five-point essay has a consistent awareness of audience and keeps the reader grounded in both the situation and the speculations. The five-point essay reveals direction and purpose and develops the relationship between the occasion and the speculations, though the writer may not maintain focus on this relationship as consistently as in the six-point paper. The five-point paper may lack the clarity of focus, the continuity, or the growing insight and fullness of the six-point essay. The speculations will be insightful but not as probing as in a six-point essay.

Elaboration of Argument. As in the six-point essay, the writer engages in extended, thoughtful speculation, using effective arguments to convince the reader of the logic and validity of the speculations. The writer chooses evidence that is relevant and convincing; the supporting evidence will be more predictable than in the six-point essay. The writer may mention several possible causes and effects or may concentrate only on one; however, the supporting details, though relevant and convincing, will not be as richly developed.

Score Point 4 - Adequate Achievement

Presenting the Situation. The writer of the four-point essay presents the situation but with less assuredness than is evidenced in five- or six-point papers. It may not be as clearly focused, or it may lack the detail or specificity of the five- or six-point essays. The writer may, for instance, simply paraphrase the prompt rather than define a focused situation linked to it. On the other hand, the situation may tend to dominate the four-point essay, though these writers do offer some explicit speculation. The presentation of the situation will be adequate to orient readers to the proposed causes and effects. Although the language in the four-point essay is generally appropriate, it may be somewhat conventional and predictable.

Logic and Relevance of Causes and Effects. The writer of the four-point essay establishes a connection between the situation and the postulated causes and effects, but may not maintain this connection as explicitly or effectively as in the five- and six-point essays. The proposed causes and effects may be logical but predictable. They will arise from or be appropriate to the situation; but they may seem tangential, not grounded as firmly in the situation. Acknowledgment of readers is not as evident as the five- and six-point essays, and the speculations may be disconnected. A four-point essay may be characterized by thoughtfulness rather than inventiveness.

Elaboration of Argument. The writer of the four-point essay offers less persuasive evidence for the validity of the proposed causes and effects. The essay exhibits some internal logic and an overall sense of organization; but it may not show a consistent relationship between the situation and the effects or causes. There may be some irrelevant details. The essay shows a sustained control of sentence structures but may have less variety than the five- and six-point essays. The writer exhibits both an understanding of the situation and an exploration of possible causes and effects; but the development and explanations of the speculations may seem somewhat thin.

Score Point 3 - Some Evidence of Achievement

Presenting the Situation. The writer of a three-point essay presents a situation, but it may either be brief or dominate the essay. There is limited use of strategies characterized by commonplace language. The writer may simply paraphrase the prompt rather than define the situation. The writer may not clearly establish the boundaries of the situation or may not seem to fully understand it. The writer may not acknowledge readers.

Logic and Relevance of Causes and Effects. Though the speculations in the three-point essay are at least tangentially relevant, the writer may tend to list a series of causes and effects rather than develop them or ground them in the situation. On the other hand, there may be only one minimally developed cause or effect mentioned. These essays may have a meandering quality rather than the purposeful, logical movement of a persuasive argument. The speculations may seem obvious, superficial, or predictable. There may appear to be little conscious awareness of the reader and little effort to convince a reader by developing a logical cause-effect relationship.

Elaboration of Argument. Elaboration in the three-point essay is limited, perhaps to a brief explanation of one cause or effect or to a listing of several, with minimal development. These essays lack consistency in development of detail. Though they may provide rudimentary connections between the situation and the speculations, the sequence and organizational pattern may be unclear. The word choice is usually appropriate to the content; however, the writer may rely on general rather than specific language.

The essay may seem generally competent and the speculations may be interesting; but the writer has not yet learned that speculation is persuasive and requires systematically *developed* arguments carefully grounded in a precisely defined situation.

Score Point 2 – Little Evidence of Achievement

Presenting the Occasion. The writer of a two-point essay exhibits only minimal understanding of the situation. These essays may begin abruptly. The writer may attempt to construct a situation, but because of omissions, erratic jumps in time or place, or breakdowns in cohesion, will not establish focus. In some two-point essays, the situation will dominate the essay. Other two-point essays will have no occasion, beginning abruptly with a list of causes and effects.

Logic and Relevance of Causes and Effects. If there is a situation, the speculations may be either brief or meandering and unfocused. There is little connection between the situation and the speculations, and little evidence of any logical organization. Some of the proposed causes or effects may seem illogical or unrelated to the situation.

Elaboration of Argument. There is little elaboration in the two-point essay, often merely listing. Some details may be irrelevant and unconnected to either the situation or the speculations. These essays may tend to be quite brief, as there usually is little development either of the situation or of the causes and effects; or they may be extended generalized ramblings with little grounding at all in either a situation or in "what if" conjecturing. The two-point essay may merely list causes and effects without support or argument. The two-point essay contains little or no argument or effort to persuade the reader.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Presenting the Situation. If there is a situation, it is very brief and devoid of specificity or concreteness. The one-point essay may point vaguely to a situation without focusing or establishing its boundaries.

Logic and Relevance of Causes and Effects. If there are speculations, they are brief and superficial attempts at prediction rather than considered explorations of possibilities. There is no evidence of a logical connection between the situation and the causes and effects. The proposed causes and effects, if any, may be difficult to identify or understand.

Elaboration of Argument. There is little or no elaboration of either the situation or of the causes and effects. Speculations, if presented at all, are not argued. There are frequent lapses in sentence sense, resulting in confusion, and the essay relies on a limited use of common words, exhibiting a meager range of word choice. There is rarely any sense of the reader. The writer of the one-point essay is usually brief and is often not coherent.

Score Point 0 – Inappropriate Response

Off topic or unscorable.

Sample Student Papers
Speculation About Causes and Effects

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

Art is a very broad subject and it affects our lives in many ways. If every sigle work of art were to disappear; humanity wouldn't be able to cope with it. We would be forced to create new ones or go insane.

There are many ways a world without art could end up. If every single thing from the Mona Lisa to Metallica to Friday the 13th part VIII were to vanish, people would be left with absolutely no way of expresing their emotions, relesing their feelings, and entertaining themselves. In short, a boring world. Under those conditions, it is very easy to go completely insane, especially since people have become so accustomed to movies, music, and TV's only. Instead of a plant full of raving lunatics, however, a more likely scenario is one where the people create new ones or try to reproduce

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

the lost works of art. The result? A new era in art, where people can create anything and not have it compared to something someone did 500 years ago. The standards for art would be completely rearranged.

On the other hand, if only the finest works of art were to disappear, we would be left with only junk For example, Shakespeare and Dante would be replaced with shelves of romance novels and cheap horror stories.

One of two things would occur; either we would (again) create new forms of art, or we would lower our standards. If we created more art, we would only have the worst elements to influence us. Therefore, it's possible that we would continue to put out trash and junk. If our standard were lowered, we would accept romance novels and other junk as art, with pretty much the same results as above.

A world without art would be drastically changed, and not for the better. We depend heavily on art for entertainment and releasing

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

our emotions through paintings, music, etc. To
lose something like that would be disastrous

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

The writer of this essay begins by clearly presenting the context for his discussion. He suggests that if all our current works of art disappeared, we would need to create new art or be seriously affected by the lack of art in our lives.

He discusses the effects of an artless world logically and dramatically. The writer cites specific classical and contemporary examples and speculates on the possible effect of their loss. Although the language is occasionally predictable, the argument is convincing that the world would have to invent new art forms or lower its standards of judgment of existing forms.

Although the writer could benefit from additional suggestion for improvement from a writing process response group, the essay is an excellent first draft speculation written under the constraints of a testing situation.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

Our world has just entered a new dimension in which the people are existing, but not living. The communication is limited and everyone is going through their daily lives. As you walks into your home, which is the typical box with separated square rooms, you notice things that stand out to you as being particularly strange.

First, your house is very different than it was when you left it an hour ago. Instead of your beautiful architecture and thriving garden, you are left with a square box and dirt for a front yard.

Second, as you turn the plain round knob on your plain wooden door, you second-guess yourself as to whether or not this is really your home. You have three small children and so naturally you are suspicious when you

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

don't hear them running around playing tag or cops and robbers. You walk into your house and find yourself staring at your blank, white walls. Your piano is missing and there are no magazines spralled accross the coffee table in your living room. You don't here the television blaring away in your family room so you assume your husband is not home. You continue into the family room to see your husband explaining mathematics to your children. This is not a usual scene in your household.

You notice that you are feeling hungry. You walk to your refrigerator in the kitchen and something catches you off-guard. The many colorful and creative scribbles and drawing that usually adorn you refrigerator are gone.

You have a very unsettled feeling and because it is getting late, you send your children to bed. You offer to read them a bedtime story and you receive a most curious response.

"What's a story?" they ask.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

"A book," you answer. "Like the ones I always read to you."

"Read?" they ask.

After all of this confusion, you finally realizes what has happened. All of the creativity has been sucked out of life. There is no more expression, nothing to treasure or admire. People are living to get things done and to continue the species, but for no other purpose. There is no joy, nothing to be happy for or excited about and no motivation to do anything

"How could this have happened?" you ask yourself. There is only one answer: through the schools. It is the place where your children spend most of their time and where they are the most influence. If you take the creativity, the expression out of the schools, you are therefore taking it out of the students.

You kiss your children good-night and

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

they quickly close their eyes and begin to sleep for there is nothing to stay awake for. You leave the room and ponder the question of how such a tragedy could overcome this world of ours.

Afternotes: Just recently I have learned that our dance department here at Santa Rosa will be cut from the curriculum next year. What's next? Will you cut drama and music also? Is our state working toward a place like I have written about? Please, don't take away the things that keep most of us at school.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

In an original and engaging essay, this writer speculates about a variety of effects resulting from the removal of art from the world. The writer uses narrative techniques to create a fanciful scenario to show the effects of having "all of the creativity . . . sucked out of life." The writer skillfully builds detailed speculation into the narrative, exploring the specific differences in her home ("your piano is missing. . ." and "the many colorful scribbles and drawing that usually adorn you refrigerator are gone"), exploring the effects on children ("What's a story?"), and moving on to some strongly stated predictions about the effect of such a loss on society itself ("there is no joy . . . and no motivation to do anything").

Although couched within the frame of a fanciful situation, the writer's prediction and her position are clear. She makes a strong argument against the advent of a world without art. In her "afternotes" she cites a real-life personal example of the demise of her school's dance program, and continues to build the argument she introduced and developed through her fantasy. The consistent imaginative quality of the narrative the vivid concrete language and the authoritative authentic voice that pervades the essay moves this paper to the realm of high achievement.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

With an illeracy rate so high it is no wonder why our country is in such bad shape. Most people who are illerate are homeless or are on welfare or someother programs. Because they are illiterate we are forced to start new programs every day for them. The money for these programs comes directly out of the tax payers pockets. We, the literate are forced to pay the price for the illiterate. I'm not meaning to sound heart less or anything, but I don't think that it is fair for us to pay the price.

Another problem is that people who are illiterate cannot find jobs, and that results or will eventually result in an extreamly huge homeless population. Since these people cannot ~~get~~ find jobs they are forced into the streets or slums, polluting our citys. Quite frankly, I don't like walking down the street, and have to see a homeliss person. Don't get me wrong, not all homeless people are illiterate, but I would estimate maybe 45-60% are. Then because they are homeliss we have to deal with them which is a greater expence than ~~the~~ teaching

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(continued)*

them to read and write.

Think about the future. People who are illerate probably have ~~chd~~ children. Since the parents are not literate ~~they~~ the childern will probably never have the chance to be literate, and the cycle will continue, therefor increasing the percentage of illerate adults. I may be repeating myself a lot, but it is all a ~~cycle~~ cycle. If a person is illerate, they can't find a job, they cannot afford a home so they become homeless, since they are illiterate their children will be illiterate, and so on, and we the literate are the ones who will end up having to take care of them.

Because of illiteracy our great country falls behind. Other countries start taking over, and we are left with nothing. If we are not carefull the great United States of America could end up like some of these third world countries where 90% of the entire population is illiterate, and some other country tries to take over and we can't do anything because

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

we are all illiterate! I know that sounds far fetched, but just think about it.

Commentary for Mid-range Achievement Essay

This writer, in speculating about the effects of illiteracy on society, presents four outcomes and provides extensive if somewhat confused elaboration about each. While the reader is encouraged by the writer's earnest attempt to grapple with a serious issue, a couple of breaks in internal logic (e.g. "People who are illiterate probably have children . . ."), detract from other more purposeful arguments.

Although this writer exhibits a sustained control of sentence structure, her diction and syntax tend to be conventional and predictable. She acknowledges the reader in several places ("I'm not meaning to sound heartless or anything . . .", "Don't get me wrong . . .", and "I know that sounds far-fetched . . .") and writes, in the end, a generally appropriate if somewhat conventional first-draft essay.

In a classroom setting, this writer could be helped by a peer group review where her supporting ideas would come under closer scrutiny.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

If there were no works of art is the world, the world would only be one color. By no works of art, I mean no television, no poetry, no novels, no museums, no paintings. The things that would exist would have no individuality and would be bland, and that is what I mean by it being only one color.

I can just picture it, all of the cars, all of the houses, and even all of the people would look the same. If they wern't all the same, they would be different, which means creativity, which means individuality, which means art.

If there was no individuality, we probably wouldn't even know that there was America. This is because Colombus would want to be like everyone else, and think that the world was flat. We would be extremely ignorant to life

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

if there was no forms of art in the world.

If there is no art in the world, there would be nothing to look forward to, except going to work That is going to work on an assembly line, creating things that are completely alike. Now you must remember, this assembly line would be in a boring wherehouse with grey walls, and no pictures or music in the background.

You see, without art, the world would be only one color. It would be lifeless, like robots controlled us, and I wouldn't want to live here. Well, I wouldn't even know what art is, so I guess I wouldn't mind. Everyone should be grateful that art lives, and I hope that it has as big of an influence on your life as it does on mine.

Commentary for Mid-range Achievement

In this middle range paper, the writer adequately defines the situation as a world without art—a "bland" world of only one color with "no individuality." She helps the reader to imagine such a world by speculating that all cars, all houses would be the same and all creativity and joy would be taken out of life. Although she exhibits some internal logic and overall sense of organization, her evidence seems less insightful and persuasive than a high paper.

This writer could benefit from peer writing groups where she would expand her ideas and elaborate more on them.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

Many books and other reading materials I find harder to than others fer many reasons. First, in some cases the books are extremely long, which makes it hard to finish. Second, many books and other materials have words or phrases that many Student don't know the meaning and understand what the author is talking about. Last, some books often aren't interesting enough to make a Student want to keep reading it, which makas the student not interested and not finish the book. I find that many students complain of these reasons about reading material and therefore never finish a book. If authers made book more interesting and not so lengthy students might be more willing to read their material.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

The situation mentioned in the opening sentence if this essay is not clearly established. The writer then moves into a list of speculations, presented with no logical connection other than why students find certain books harder to read than others. Though this writer clearly has strong ideas about the types of books students are willing to read, he would benefit from extended opportunities to work on elaboration of the causes of the situation.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

Illiteracy is a problem that many have seen as a rare and simple situation with few complications. In actuality however, many areas in our society are affected by this serious affliction. For example, an illiterate man would have a very difficult time driving in a city other than his own. Since he would not be able to read the road signs and streetnames, he would be inevitably lost without verbal communication. In short, an illiterate person would be very restraned in today's society.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

Despite a pleasing opening and some evidence of sophisticated diction ("serious affliction" and "he would be inevitably lost . . .") this paper falls into the low range because of its dearth of elaboration. The writer's lone example of an illiterate driver unable to read road signs fits well; however, one longs for two or three other examples to add weight to his speculation. This writer clearly displays the potential to write a stronger speculation essay. With more experiences in both reading and writing speculation essays, as well as more practice in developing lists or clusters as a starting point for elaboration, this writer should be able to write an adequate or commendable paper.

IV. Sample High School Prompt

Section One
Reading

"Story of an Hour"

Before You Read

You are going to read "Story of an Hour," a short story written by Kate Chopin at the beginning of the twentieth century. After you read the story, you will be responding to questions and activities that show what you think and feel about it.

Reading Situation

Read the story by Kate Chopin. Make notes of your questions and reactions as you read. You may underline phrases or passages you think are memorable or important.

Story of an Hour

Notes/Response

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

Notes/Response

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in it dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will — as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "Free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

Notes/Response

She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him — sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door — you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

Notes/Response

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease — of joy that kills.

Writing About Your Reading

1. What is your first response to the story? Take a few minutes to write down any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

2. Below is a double entry journal. In the left column, copy short passages from the story that seem intriguing, interesting, or relate to your life in some way. In the right column, write your responses to the passages you have selected. Your responses might indicate what the passage means, what it reminds you of, what you don't understand, how you feel about it, or any other comments that seem appropriate.

   Remember, copy the passage or quotation on the top of the left column and write your comments directly opposite in the right column. Then, copy your next passage and write your response opposite, etc.

Passage from the story	Response to the passage

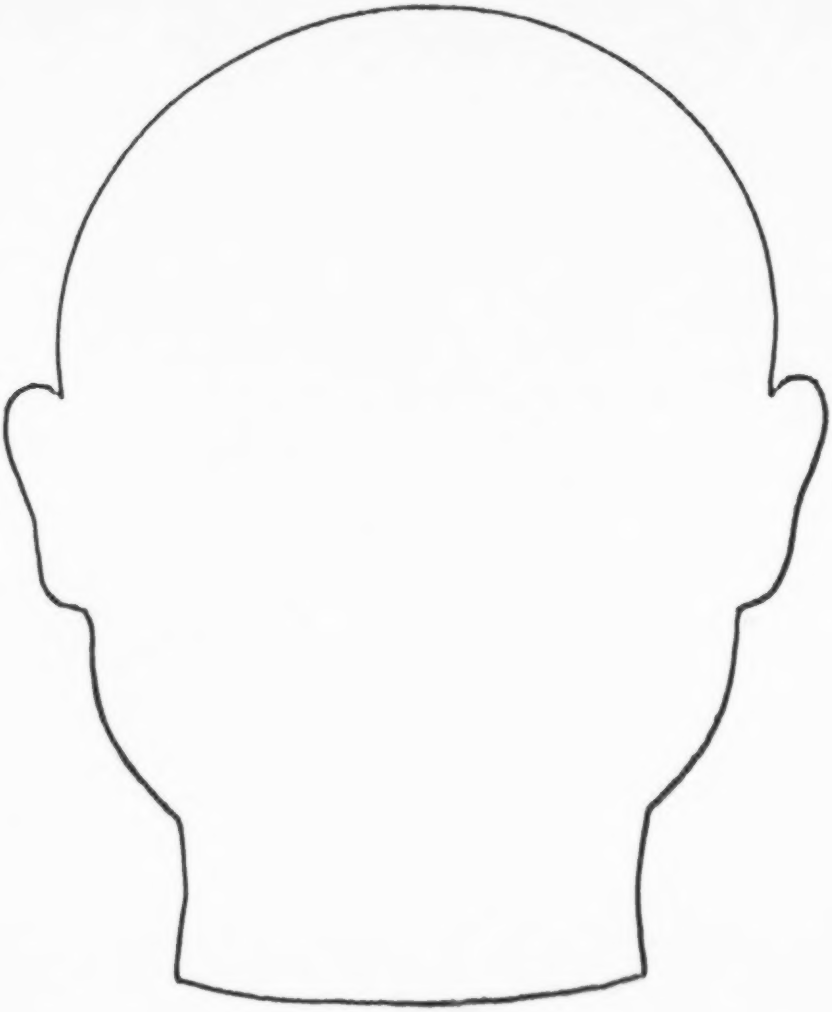
3. There were several important events in the story. Select the one event you feel is most important and explain why you feel this way.

4. Look at the ideas you have generated so far. Now, imagine that you are Mrs. Mallard.

   Below is an "open mind" diagram, a way of making a visual representation of what a character might be thinking or feeling at a particular time. In order to understand Mrs. Mallard more fully, create an "open mind" for her. Inside the drawing, fill in symbols, images, words, phrases, or any combination of these which represent what Mrs. Mallard was thinking and feeling as she was "drinking a very elixir of life through that open window."

   Note: an elixir is a liquid substance which people used to believe would prolong life. It means "the embodiment of perfection."

Open Mind for Mrs. Mallard



5. Write an explanation of the meaning of the symbols, images, words, or phrases which you included in your open mind and explain why you chose them.

6. Discuss the transformation that Mrs. Mallard undergoes as the story moves forward. Explain in the space below.

What the character first thought	What the character finally thought	How do you explain the change?

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Section Two
Working With Your Group

"Story of an Hour"

Guidelines for Working with Your Group

During this part of the test, your group will discuss what you read during Section One. It is important that everyone in the group has a chance to participate. One person should volunteer to act as the discussion leader. The responsibilities of this person are to keep the discussion on the topic, to see that everyone has a chance to talk, and to keep an eye on the clock. The responsibilities of each member are to share in the discussion and take notes or write responses when called for. Select your discussion leader now and write that person's name here:

Discussion leader: ____

What was most memorable about the short story "Story of an Hour"? Quickly jot down your own ideas below.

Now share these ideas with your group and record some new ideas which other people presented.

Now with your group, imagine that Mrs. Mallard has not died at the end of the story. Discuss whether or not this marriage could be saved. In the space below, write down the ideas presented by members of your group on the following:

Reasons the marriage can be saved

Reasons the marriage cannot be saved

Based on the group discussion, what is your opinion about this marriage? Why? Briefly write your opinions and reasons here. Take only a few minutes to do this.

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Mrs. Mallard felt "free" after hearing about her husband's death. Why did she feel this way, and what were her ideas about the future? Discuss this as a group. Jot down ideas from your group in the following space.

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In the space below, draw a visual representation of your interpretation of the last two paragraphs (page 4) of the short story. In your drawing, include characters and depict what is happening when Mr. Mallard returns. Remember, it is not necessary to be a good artist to draw a successful representation of a story.

Section Three
Writing

Interpreting the Character of Mrs. Mallard

Writing Situation

You have read and discussed "Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin. Think about the changes in the main character, Mrs. Mallard, and the reasons for these changes. You may use your notes from Section Two of this test.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for your English teacher in which you interpret the growth and change in Mrs. Mallard's character and what it means. As you present your interpretation, support your claims about the meaning with reasons and evidence from the story. Your essay should convince your teacher that your have thought carefully about your interpretation.

Section Three
Writing

Reflecting on Marriage and Freedom

Writing Situation

In our society, marriage is viewed as an ideal way to achieve lifetime happiness with another person. It is often thought of as a relationship where people develop and grow together to form a lifelong bond. Yet over one half of the marriages in this country end in divorce.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for your classmates reflecting on marriage and the concepts of marriage and freedom. Consider how marriage affects our ability to be "free." Relate your ideas to yourself, to those you know, and to people in general. Explain your ideas thoughtfully. You do not need to convince your readers that your ideas are best or right, simply explore your ideas thoughtfully.